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by M. P. SHIEL

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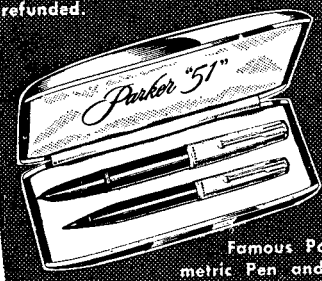

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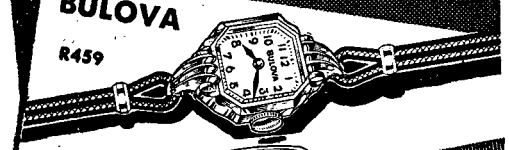
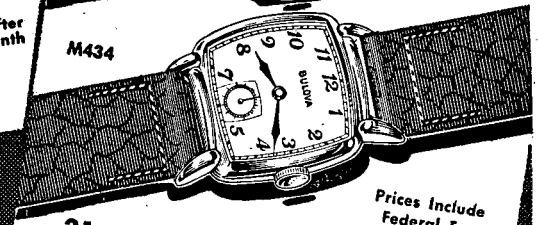


M434



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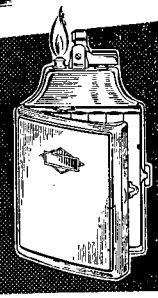

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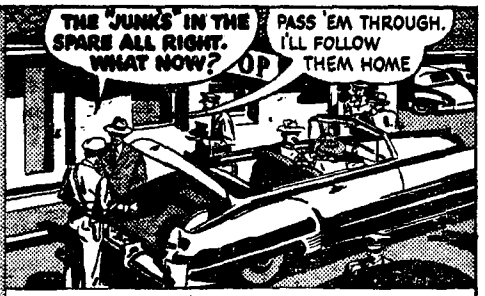
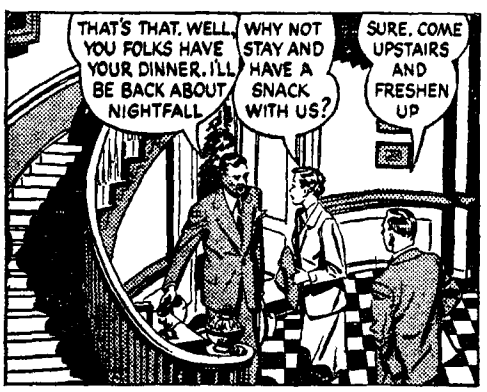


HOMEWARD BOUND AFTER A DAY AT TIJUANA, SENATOR BLAIK AND HIS DAUGHTER STOP AT THE BORDER FOR ROUTINE CUSTOM INSPECTION...

AMAZING! YOU SAY THEY PUT IT IN THE TIRE AT THAT PARKING LOT?
EXACTLY! AND TONIGHT THE GANG AT THIS END WILL TRY TO NAB IT. MAY I USE YOUR 'PHONE?


THAT'S THAT. WELL, YOU FOLKS HAVE YOUR DINNER. I'LL BE BACK ABOUT NIGHTFALL
WHY NOT STAY AND HAVE A SNACK WITH US?
SURE. COME UPSTAIRS AND FRESHEN UP

THIS BLADE SURE MAKES SHORT WORK OF WHISKERS. MY FACE FEELS GREAT!
I'M SOLD ON THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE PLENTY KEEN AND LONG-LASTING

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Famous FANTASTIC Mysteries

25¢

VOL. 10 JUNE, 1949 No. 5

Book-Length Novel

The Purple Cloud — **M. P. Shiel** — 10

Bewildered, frantic, he wandered along a nightmare trail, in one last, strange, terrible search through a silent planet—to find a single living soul—or die!

Short Story

Mirror Maze — **Stanley Mullen** — 114

He paid his money and took his pick of the glittering paths which seemed to beckon. Only one thing was sure, and that was he must go forward, and never back—into the unknown ending . . .

The Readers' Viewpoint — 6

In the Next Issue — 29

Masters of Fantasy — **Neil Austin** — 113

Dunsany—A True Lord of Fantasy

Cover by Lawrence. Inside illustrations by Lawrence and Leydenfrost.

Any resemblance between any character appearing in fictional matter, and any person, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional.

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The Readers' Viewpoint

Address comments to the Letter Editor, Famous Fantastic Mysteries, All-Fiction Field, Inc., 205 E. 42nd St., New York 17, New York.

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers:

We are old friends now, our reader-editor acquaintance going back to the September-October issue of 1939! Which means that *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* is in its tenth year!

Your enthusiastic letters indicate that you are still just as pleased as ever with *our* magazine. Of course there are a few complaints and criticisms, but it wouldn't be any fun without some dissent, would it?

It seems that this is a very good place to thank the readers who have been so kind about suggesting new stories and lending us their books from their collections of rare fantasy. And thanks to them, we have a very fine line-up all ready for the coming issues!

As this June issue goes to press we are saddened by the news of the death on February 12 of a faithful fan, Stephen Weber of Weehawken, New Jersey, who has always had our interests at heart, and who has suggested and lent us a number of important books. Here is Mr. Thyrll L. Ladd's letter, which brought the sad news—

Dear Miss Gnaedinger:

It is with great sorrow that I have to tell you some very sad news. My good friend, Stephen Weber, died yesterday afternoon, at 1:30 P.M. He was, I believe, thirty-four years old.

I know Steve planned to call and talk with you again, but I do not know whether he was ever able to get there, or not. He has been ill, off and on, a greater portion of the past year.

Stephen Weber was a real fantasy enthusiast —his love of the field was great, and his knowledge of the books and stories was great, too. He was an enthusiastic subscriber to *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, naming it the foremost of that type of magazine.

(Continued on page 123)

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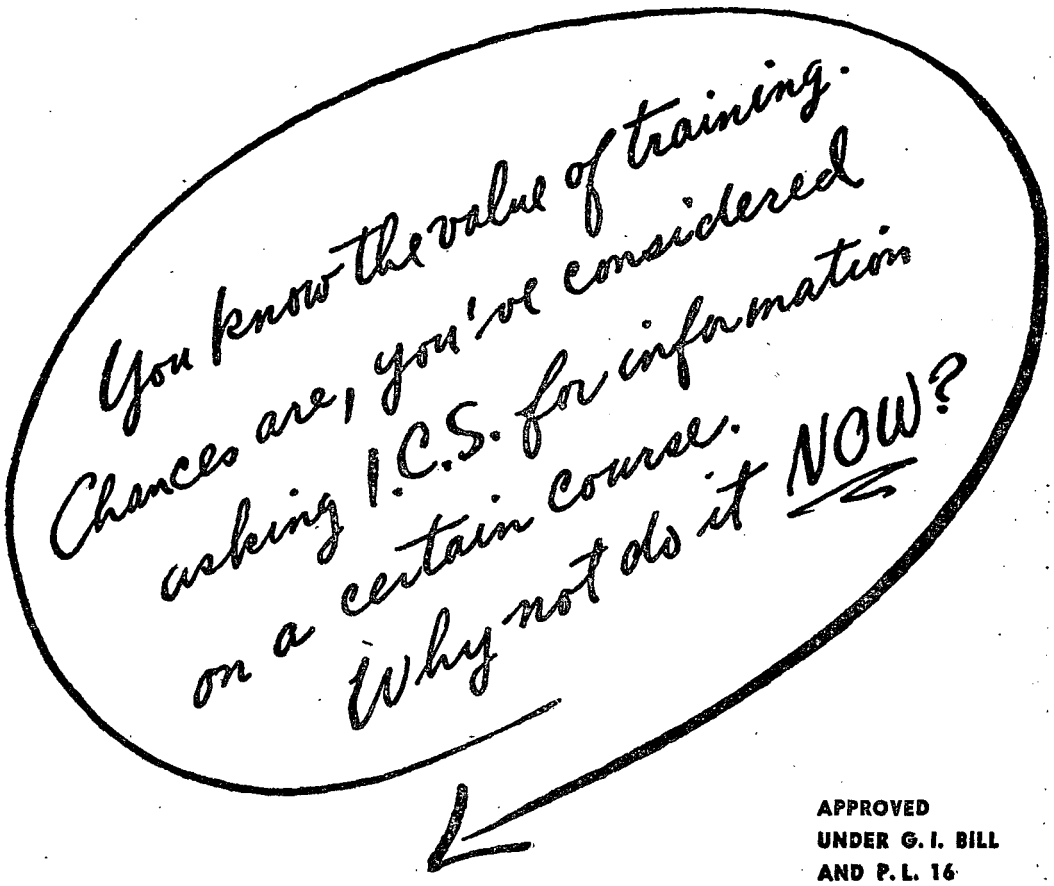
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POPULAR FILMS

Good Movie-Going For Fiction Fans

Palmer Picks:

For Murder Drama: "Too Late for Tears" with Lizabeth Scott, Dan Duryea and Don de Fore (United Artists).

Mysteriously, Jane Palmer (Lizabeth Scott) and her husband acquire a leather bag containing a fortune in cash.

Although she is determined to keep it, her husband thinks differently and checks it at Union Station. With the help of a blackmailing crook (Dan Duryea), Jane drowns her husband, but they fail to find the claim check for the money. The husband's sister and a stranger (Don de Fore), who arrive on the scene, locate the check. Jane takes it at gun's point, sheds herself of the blackmailer with a well-administered dose of poison and flees to Mexico.

The sister and stranger follow her, unravel the plot and bring Jane to a just end.

Suspensefully played, the picture makes for some spine-tingling moments.

• • •

For Adventure: "Canadian Pacific" with Randolph Scott and Jane Wyatt. (20th Century-Fox). Cinecolor.

Building this famous Canadian railroad was more than just ties and trestles—at least according to this version where it takes six-guns and two-fisted action by Tom Andrews (Randolph Scott) to overcome bad whites and renegade Indians.

Although Andrews has a temporary love affair with a female doctor (Jane Wyatt) in the railroad camp, it is his own true love, a French-Indian girl, who warns him of the Indians' plan to attack the camp. Andrews goes on a private sortie to prevent the signal for the attack from being given and gets the ringleaders—but too late. Returning to camp he joins the fight which the Indians abandon after they hear the whistle from a relief train.

The railroad background gives a different flavor to this outdoor action picture. Plenty of bang-bang and dust-biting keep it fast paced.

• • •

For A Western: "The Red Pony" with Myrna Loy, Robert Mitchum, Louis Calhern, Sheppard Strudwick, Peter Miles (Republic). Technicolor.

Not in a sense a true Western, but a picture laid against a ranch and a boy's dream about a pony come true, which even the most calloused Western picture-goer will find moving. As the story unfolds you can see the boy (Peter Miles) growing apart from his father (Sheppard Strudwick) through his love for his pony and the hero-worship of a ranch hand (Robert Mitchum) who helps him raise the animal. Myrna Loy, as the mother, understands the boy and helps him out.

A simple story, well-told and rich in human values and colorful backgrounds.

• • •

For Sports: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" with Frank Sinatra, Esther Williams, Gene Kelly (MGM). Technicolor.

Imagine Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly, as vaudevillians turned baseball players, fielding "hot ones" for a baseball team owned by Esther Williams. Silly, but nonetheless fun. When a gambler (Edward Arnold), who is betting against the team, inveigles Kelly to direct the chorus at a night club, Kelly begins to slip from the loss of sleep and is benched. Eventually, wised up by a little gal who is sweet on Sinatra, he gets back in the line-up.

The picture—and the baseball—are played for the laughs.

by Ted Palmer

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"I WAS ASHAMED OF MY FACE

until Viderm helped make my skin clearer in one short week"

(FROM A LETTER BY E. S. JORDAN, DETROIT, MICH.)

If your face is broken-out, if bad skin is making you miserable, here is how to stop worrying about pimples, blackheads and other externally-caused skin troubles.

JUST FOLLOW SKIN DOCTOR'S SIMPLE DIRECTIONS

IT DOESN'T PAY to put up with a broken-out face. Your very success in business, love and social life may depend upon your looks. Nobody likes to look at a face that is blemished by blackheads or pimples. WOMEN ARE ATTRACTED TO MEN WHO HAVE SMOOTH, CLEAR, HEALTHY-LOOKING SKIN. Business executives don't choose men whose complexions are against them. And it's just plain foolish to take chances with your happiness and success in life when the Viderm formula can do so much to give you the clearer, blemish-free face you want.

Good-looking Skin Is Not for Women Only

You—*yes, you*—can have the same handsome complexion, free from externally caused skin troubles, simply by giving your face the special care that screen stars give theirs. *Because, remember!—a good-looking, handsome appearance usually begins with the condition of your skin.* There's almost nothing to it—it is just about as easy as washing your face. *The whole secret consists of washing your face in a way that thoroughly purges the pores of every last speck of dirt and grime*—something that ordinary cleansing seldom does. In fact, examination after examination shows that, usually, it is not a case of "bad skin" so much as faulty cleansing that leaves oily grime clogging up your pores. What you should use is a highly concentrated soap like Viderm Skin Cleanser. This penetrates the pores and acts as an antiseptic. Specks of irritating dirt and grime are quickly loosened. They dissolve and disappear, leaving your skin entirely free of the dirt particles that otherwise remain as pimples, blackheads and other externally-caused skin troubles.

DON'T DO THIS!

Don't murder your skin by squeezing it. Skin is delicate. When you break it, you leave yourself open to miseries. It's far easier, far safer, to let the Double Viderm Treatment help you enjoy a handsome, clearer, blemish-free complexion.

Squeezing pimples or blackheads to get rid of them is a nasty, messy business—but that isn't the worst of it. Doing so may also be injurious and leave your face with unsightly, embarrassing blemishes. There is, now, a much easier, safer, cleaner way to help you rid your face of ugly, offensive, externally-caused skin troubles. *You merely follow a doctor's simple directions.*

Don't murder your skin! Here's all you have to do to get it smoother and clearer and to keep it that way. Use Viderm Skin Cleanser when you wash your face. Rub the rich lather of this highly-concentrated medicated soap on your face for just a few seconds and then rinse it off. Then apply a little Viderm Medicated Skin Cream and that's all there is to it. Viderm Medicated Skin Cream quickly disappears, leaving your skin nice and smooth. This simple treatment, used after shaving, helps heal tiny nicks and cuts, relieves razor-burn and smarting, besides conditioning your skin.

Give Your Face This Treat for 7 Days

Stop worrying and being embarrassed over what may happen to your skin. Just send for your Viderm Double Treatment this minute, and be confident of a smoother and clearer complexion. Follow the simple directions, written by a doctor, that you will get with your Viderm Double Treatment. Then look in your mirror and listen to your friends admire your smoother, clearer skin—the kind that women go for.

Just mail your name and address to The New York Skin Laboratory, 206 Division Street, Dept. G-1, New York City 2, N. Y. By return mail you will receive both of the Viderm formulas, complete with full directions, and mailed in a plain wrapper. On delivery, pay two dollars plus postage. If you wish, you can save the postage fee by mailing the two dollars with your letter. Then, if you aren't thrilled with results, your money will be cheerfully refunded. Remember that both of the formulas you use have been fully tested and proven, and are reliable for you. ***If they don't help you, your treatments cost you nothing.*** After you have received your Viderm, if you have any questions to ask concerning abused skin, just send them in.

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THE PURPLE CLOUD

By M. P. Shiel

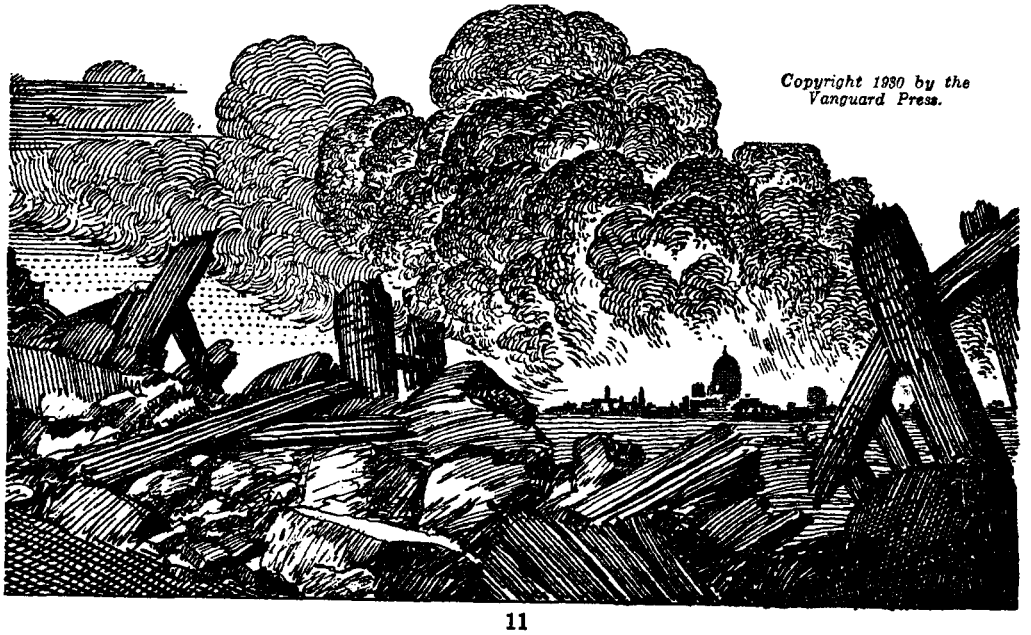
Bewildered, frantic, he wandered along a nightmare trail, in one last, strange, terrible search through a silent planet —to find a single living soul —or die!

IN MAY of this year the writer received as noteworthy a packet of papers as it has been his lot to examine—from a friend, Dr. Arthur Lister Browne, M.A., F.R.C.P.—consisting of four note-books, crowded with those giddy shapes of "shorthand", whose *ensemble* resembles startled swarms hovering on the wing—scribbled in pencil, and without vowels: so that their deciphering has been no holiday. The letter also which accompanied them was pencilled in shorthand: and this, together with the note-book marked "III", I now publish.

The following is Browne's letter:

"Dear Old Chap,—I have just been lying thinking of you, wishing that you were here to give one a last squeeze on the hand before I—*'go'*: for going I am. Four days ago I felt a soreness in the throat, so, passing by old Johnson's surgery at Selbridge, I asked him to have a look at me, and when he muttered something about membranous laryngitis it made me smile, but by the time I reached home I was hoarse, and not smiling: before night I had dyspnoea and laryngeal stridor. So I wired to London for Morgan, and, between him and Johnson, they have been opening my trachea, and singeing my inside with chromic acid and the cautery; but I am

"I will burn . . . I will ravage and riot in my kingdoms . . . and be a withering blight where I pass. . . ."



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too old a hand not to know what's what: the bronchi involved—*too far*. Morgan is still, I believe, fondly longing to add me to his successful-tracheotomy statistics, but prognosis was always my strong point, and the small consolation of my death will be the beating of a specialist up his own street. So we shall see.

"I have been arranging some of my affairs this morning, and remembered these note-books—intended letting you have them months ago, but you know my habit of putting things off, and, then, the lady was living from whom I took down the statements: now she is dead, and, as a writing man, and a man, you should be interested, if you can contrive to decipher.

"I am under morphia at present, propped up in a nice little state of languor, and, as I am able to write, will tell you something about her: her name Mary Wilson; thirty when I met her, forty-five when she died; fifteen years of her. Do you know much about the philosophy of the hypnotic trance? That was the relation between us—hypnotist and subject. She had been under another man before my time, suffered from tic of the fifth nerve, had had most of her teeth drawn before I saw her, and an attempt had been made to wrench out the nerve on the left side by external scission. But it had made no difference: the clock of hell tick-tacked in that poor woman's jaw, and it was a mercy that ever she dropped across me: my organisation was found to possess easy control over hers, and with a few suggestions I could expel her Legion.

"Well, you never saw anyone so singular as my friend, Miss Wilson: medicine-man as I am, I could never behold her without a sort of shock: she so suggested what we call 'the other world', some odour of the worm, ghost more than woman! And yet I can hardly convey to you the why of this, except by dry details as to the contours of her lofty forehead, meagre lips, pointed chin, ashen cheeks. She was lank and deplorably emaciated, her whole skeleton, except the femurs, being visible, her eyes of the bluish hue of cigarette-smoke or quinine-solution made fluorescent by X-rays, and they had the strangest, feeble, unearthly gaze, while at thirty-five her wisp of hair was white.

"She was well-to-do, lived alone in old Wooding Manorhouse, five miles from Ash Thomas; and I, 'beginning' in these parts at the time, soon took up my residence at the manor, she insisting that I should devote myself to her alone.

"Well, I found that, in the state of trance, Miss Wilson possessed remarkable powers: not peculiar to herself in *kind*, but so reliable, exact, far-reaching, in degree. Any tyro in psychical science will now sit and discourse about the reporting powers of the mind in the trance-state—a fact which Psychical Research only after endless investigations admits to be scientific, but known to every old crone in the Middle Ages; but I say that Miss Wilson's powers were 'remarkable', because I believe that, *in general*, the powers manifest themselves more particularly with regard to space, as distinct from time, the spirit roaming in the present, travelling over a plain; but Miss Wilson's gift was special in this, that she travelled all ways, and easily in all but one, east, west, up, down, in the past, the present, and the future.

"THIS I discovered gradually. She would emit a stream of sounds—I can hardly call it *speech*—murmurous, guttural, mixed with puffy breath-sounds of the languid lips, this accompanied by an intense contraction of the pupils, absence of the knee-jerk, rigor, a rapt and arrant expression; and I got into the habit of sitting long at her bedside, fascinated by her, trying to catch the import of that visionary language which came croaking from her throat, puffing and fluttering from her lips, until in the course of years my ear learned to discern the words; 'the veil was rent' for me, too; and I could follow somewhat the trips of her musing and wandering spirit.

"I heard her one day utter some words which were familiar to me: 'Such were the arts by which the Romans extended their conquests, and attained the palm of victory'—from Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall', which I could guess that she had never read.

"I said in a stern voice: 'Where are you?'

"She replied, 'Us are eight hundred miles above. A man is writing. Us are reading'.

"I may tell you two things: first, that in trance she never spoke of herself as 'I', but, for some reason, in this *objective* way, as 'us': 'us are', she would say, 'us went', though, of course, she was 'educated'; secondly, when wandering in the past she always represented herself as being *'above'* (the earth), and higher the further back in time she went; in describing present events she felt herself *'on'*, while, as regards the future, she invariably declared that 'us' were so many miles 'within'.

"To her travels in this last direction,

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however, there seemed to exist fixed limits: I say seemed, meaning that, in spite of my efforts, she never, in fact, went far in this direction. Three, four thousand 'miles' were common figures on her lips in describing her distance 'above'; but her distance 'within' never got beyond sixty. Usually she would say twenty—twenty-five, appearing in relation to the future to resemble a diver, who, the deeper he strives, finds a more resistant pressure, until at no great depth resistance becomes prohibition, and after that the man can no deeper strive.

"I am afraid I can't go on, though I could tell you a lot about this lady. For fifteen years, off and on, I sat listening by her dim bedside, until at last my expert ear could detect the sense of her faintest exhalation.

"I heard then the 'Decline and Fall' from beginning to end; and though some of her reports were the most frivolous stuff, over others I have hung in a horror of interest. Certainly, I have heard some amazing words proceed from those spirit-lips of Mary Wilson. Sometimes I could hitch her repeatedly to any scene or subject that I chose by the mere use of my will; at other times the flighty waywardness of her foot eluded me: she resisted—she disobeyed; otherwise I might have sent you, not four note-books, but twenty. About the fifth year it struck me that I should do well to jot down her more connected utterance, since I knew shorthand, and I did. . . .

"Note-book 'III' belongs to the eleventh year, its history being this: I heard her one afternoon murmuring in the intonation used when *reading*, asked her where she was, and she replied: 'Us are forty-five miles within: us read, another writes'. . . .

"But no more of Mary Wilson now: rather let us think a little of A. L. Browne —with a breathing-tube in his trachea, and Eternity under his pillow. . . ." (Dr. Browne's letter then continues on subjects of no interest here.)

(My transcription of the shorthand book "III" I now proceed to give, merely reminding the reader that the words form the substance of a document to be written, or to be motived (according to Miss Wilson), in that Future, which, no less than the Past, substantially exists in the Present—though, like the Past, we see it not. I need only add that the title, division into paragraphs, &c., have been arbitrarily contrived by myself for convenience.)

(Here begins the notebook marked III)

WE LEFT St. Katherine's Docks in beautiful weather on the afternoon of the 19th of June, full of good hope, bound for the Pole.

All about the docks was one region of heads stretched out in innumerable vagueness, and down the river to Woolwich a continuous roaring and murmuring of bees droned from both shores to cheer our journey.

The expedition was partly a national affair, subvented by Government: and if ever ship was well-found it was the *Boreal*, which had a frame tougher far than any battleship's, capable of ramming some ten yards of drift-ice, and was stuffed with sufficient pemmican, cod-roe, fish-meal, and so on, to last us six years.

We were seventeen, all told the five Heads (so to speak) of the undertaking being Clark (our Chief), John Mew (commander), Aubrey Maitland (meteorologist), Wilson (electrician), and myself (doctor, botanist, and assistant meteorologist).

The idea was to get as far east as the 100°, or the 120° of longitude; to catch there the northern current; to push and drift our way northward; and, when the ship could no further penetrate, to leave her (either three, or else four, of us, on ski), and with sledges drawn by dogs and reindeer make a dash for the Pole.

This had also been the plan of the last expedition—that of the *Nix*—and of others, the *Boreal* only differing from the *Nix* in being a thing of nicer design.

Our voyage was without incident up to the end of July, when we encountered a drift of ice-floes. On the 1st of August we were at Kabarova, where we met our coal-ship, and took in some coal for an emergency, liquid air being our proper motor; also forty-three dogs, four reindeer, and a quantity of reindeer-moss; and two days later we turned our bows finally northward and eastward, passing through heavy "slack" ice under sail and liquid air in crisp weather, till, on the 27th of August, we lay moored to a floe off the desolate island of Taimur.

The first thing which we saw here was a bear on the shore, watching for young white-fish: and promptly Clark, Mew, and Lamburn (engineer) went on shore in the launch, I and Maitland following in the pram, each party with three dogs.

It was while climbing away inland that Maitland said to me: "When Clark leaves

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the ship for the dash to the Pole, it is three, not two of us, after all, that he is going to take with him, making a party of four."

I: "Is that so? Who knows?"

Maitland: "Wilson does. Clark has let it out in conversation with Wilson."

I: "Well, the more the merrier. Who will be the three?"

Maitland: "Wilson is sure to be in it, and there may be Mew, making the third. As to the fourth, I suppose *I* shall get left out in the cold."

I: "More likely I."

Maitland: "Well, the race is between us four: Wilson, Mew, you and I. It is a question of physical fitness combined with special knowledge. You are too lucky a dog to get left out, Jeffson."

I: "Well, what does it matter, so long as the expedition is a success? That's the main thing."

Maitland: "Oh, yes, that's all very fine talk. But isn't it rather a pose to affect to despise $175,000,000? *I* want to be in at the death, and mean to be, if I can."

"Look," I whispered—"a bear."

It was a mother and cub: and with a stubborn trudge she came wagging her low head, having no doubt smelled the dogs. So we separated on the instant, doubling different ways behind ice-boulders, wanting her to go on nearer the shore, before killing; but, in passing close, she spied, and bore down at a trot upon me, whereupon I fired into her neck; and at once, with a roar, she turned tail, making now straight in Maitland's direction.

"I saw him run out from cover some hundred yards away, aiming his long-gun; but no report followed: and in half a minute he was under her fore-paws, she rapping out slaps at the barking, shrinking dogs. Maitland roared for my help; and at the moment, I, poor wretch, in greater misery than he, stood shivering in an ague: for all at once one of those wrangles of the voices of my destiny was filling my bosom with commotion, one bidding me dash to Maitland's aid, one passionately commanding me be still. But it lasted, I fancy, some seconds only before I ran and got a shot into the bear's brain; and Maitland leapt up with a rent down his face.

But singular destiny! Whatever I did—if I did evil, if I did good—the result was the same: tragedy dark and sinister! Poor Maitland was doomed that voyage, and my rescue of him was the means employed to make his death the more sure.

Well, we left Taimur the same day, and good-bye now to both land and open sea. Till we passed the latitude of Cape Chelyuskin (which we did not sight), it was one succession of ice-belts, with Mew in the crow's nest tormenting the electric bell to the engine-room, the anchor hanging ready to drop, and Clark taking soundings. Progress was slow, and the Polar night gathered round us gradually, as we groped still onward and onward into the indigo and glimmering clime of frore, we now leaving off bed-coverings of reindeer-skin to take to sleeping-bags, eight of the dogs having died by the 25th of September, when we were experiencing 19° of frost. In the darkest part of our night the Northern Light cast its solemn gonfalon over us, quivering round the skies in a million fickle gauds.

Meantime, the relations between the members of our little crew were excellent—with one exception: David Wilson and I were not good friends.

He and I had hardly exchanged ten sentences, in spite of our constant companionship in the vessel.

WELL, up to 78° of latitude the weather had been splendid, but on the night of the 7th of October—well I remember it—we experienced a fierce tempest. Our tub of a ship rolled like a swing, drenching the whimpering dogs at every lurch, and hurling everything on board into confusion; the petroleum-launch was washed from the davits; down at one time to 40 below zero sank the thermometer; while a high aurora was whiffed into a dishevelled crush of chromes, resembling the palette of some rabid Rafael or mixed battle of seraphim in their robes, and looking the very symbol of tribulation, tempest, wreck, and distraction. I, for the first time, was sick.

It was with a dizzy brain, therefore, that I went off watch to bunk. Soon, indeed, I fell asleep; but the rolls and shocks of the ship, combined with the ponderous Greenland-anorak which I had on, and the state of my body, together produced a frightful nightmare, in which I was conscious of a vain struggle to move, a vain fight for breath, for the sleeping-bag turned to an iceberg on my bosom.

Now my eyes opened to waking; the electric light was shining in the cabin; and there stood David Wilson looking at me.

Wilson was a big man, with a massively-built face, long, made longer by a beard, having nervous contractions of the flesh at the cheek-bones, and splashed with

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freckles: I can see him now, his clinging pose, his mouth of disgust, his whole air, as he stood crouching and lurching there.

What he was doing in my cabin I did not know. To think, my good God, that he should have been led there just then! This was one of the four-men starboard berths; *his* was a-port; yet there he was. But he explained at once.

"Sorry to interrupt your innocent dreams," says he: "The mercury in Maitland's thermometer is frozen, and he asked me to hand him his alcohol one from his bunk. . . ."

I did not answer. A hatred was in my heart against this man.

The next day the storm died away, and either three or four days later the slush-ice between the floes froze definitely. The *Boreal's* way being thus blocked, we warped her with ice-anchors and capstan into the position in which she should lay up for her winter's drift. This was in about 79° 20′ N. The sun had now totally vanished from our bleak abode, not to reappear till the following year.

Well, there was sledging with the dogs, and bear-hunting among the hummocks, as the months, one by one, went by; one day Wilson, by far our best shot, got a walrus-bull; Clark followed the traditional pursuit of a Chief, examining crustacea; Maitland and I were in a relation of close friendship, and I assisted his meteorological observations in a snow-hut built near the ship; sometimes throughout the twenty-four hours a luminous blue moon, very spectral, very fair, imbued our dim and livid dominion.

It was four days before Christmas that Clark made the great announcement; he had decided, he said, if our fine northward drift continued, to leave the ship near the middle of March for the dash to the Pole, taking with him the four reindeer, all the dogs, four sledges, four kayaks, and three companions whom he had decided to invite being: Wilson, Mew, and Maitland.

He said it at dinner; and, as he said it, David Wilson glanced at my face with a smile of glad malice that *I* was left out.

I remember well: the aurora that night was in the sky, at its brink floating a moon surrounded by a ring, with two mock-moons; but all shone very vague and far, and a fog which had already lasted some days made the ship's bows indistinct to me, as I paced the bridge on my watch, three hours after Clark's announcement.

For a long time all was quite quiet, save for the occasional whine of a dog, I all alone there; and, as it grew toward the end of my watch, when Maitland would follow me, my slow tread tolled as for the grave, the mountainous ice lying vague round me in its shroud and taciturnity, not less dreadfully strange than eternity itself.

But presently several of the dogs began barking together, left off and began again. I said to myself: "There's a bear about, somewhere. . . . "

And after some minutes I saw—thought that I saw—it, though the fog had, if anything thickened: it being now very near the end of my watch.

It had entered the ship, I conjectured, by the boards which slanted from the port gangway down to the ice. Once before, in November, a bear, having smelled the dogs, had ventured on board at midnight; and *then* there had resulted a regular hubbub among the dogs; *now*, even in the midst of my excitement, I wondered at their quietness, though some whimpered—with fear, I thought. I saw the creature steal forward from the hatchway toward the kennels a-port; and I ran noiselessly, to snatch the watch-gun which stood always loaded by the companionway.

By this time the form had passed the kennels, had walked to the bows, was now making toward me on the starboard side; and, as I took aim, never, I thought, had I beheld so immense a bear—though I made allowance for the magnifying effect of the fog.

My finger was on the trigger; and in that instant a shivering sickness took me, the two voices shouting at me, "Shoot!" "Shoot not!" "Shoot!" Ah, well, that latter was irresistible. I pulled the trigger. The report hooted through the Polar glooms.

As the creature dropped, both Wilson and Clark were up at once; and we three hurried to the spot.

But the first near glance discerned a singular species of bear; and when Wilson put his hand to the head a lax skin came away at his touch. . . . It was Aubrey Maitland who was underneath it; and I had shot him dead.

For some days he had been cleaning skins, among them the skin of the bear from which I had saved him at Taimur, and, as Maitland was a born pantomimist, continually inventing hoaxes, perhaps to startle me with a false alarm in the very skin of the creature which had so nearly done for him, he had thrown it round him on finishing its cleaning, then in wanton fun had crept on deck at the hour of his

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watch; and the head of the bear-skin, and the fog, must have prevented him from seeing me taking aim.

This thing made me ill for many days: for I saw that the hand of fate was upon me. When I rose from bed, poor Maitland was lying in the ice behind the great camel-shaped hummock close by us.

BY THE end of January we had drifted to 80° 55′; and it was then that Clark, in the presence of Wilson, asked me if I would make the fourth man, in the place of poor Maitland, for the dash in March. When I said, "Yes, I am willing," David Wilson spat with a disgusted emphasis; then, a minute later, he sighed, with "Ah, poor Maitland . . ." and drew in his breath.

God knows, I had an impulse to spring then and there at his gullet, and strangle him; but I restrained myself.

There remained now hardly a month before the dash, and all hands set to work with a will, measuring the dogs, making harness and seal-skin shoes for them, overhauling sledges and kayaks, and cutting out every possible ounce of weight. But we were not destined, after all, to set out that year; about the 20th of February the ice began to pack, subjecting the ship to terrific pressure, while we found it necessary to make trumpets of our hands to shout into each others' ears, the entire ice-continent crashing, popping, crackling on every side in cosmic upheaval; and, expecting every moment to see the *Boreal* cracked to splinters, we had set about unpacking provisions, and placing sledges, kayaks, dogs and everything in a position for instant flight. Five days it lasted, accompanied by a storm from the north, which by the end of February, had driven us back south into latitude 79° 40′. Clark, of course, then abandoned all thought of the Pole for that summer.

And immediately afterwards we made a startling discovery; that our stock of reindeer-moss was now somehow ridiculously small. Egan, our second-mate, was blamed; but that did not help matters: the sad fact remained; and, since Clark, when begged to kill one or two of the deer, pig-headedly refused, by the beginning of summer every one was dead.

Well, our northward drift recommenced. Toward the middle of February we saw a mirage of the coming sun above the horizon; there were flights of Arctic petrels and snow-buntings; spring was with us; and in an ice-pack of big hummocks and narrow lanes we made progress all summer.

When the last of the deer died, my heart had sunk, and when the dogs killed two of their number, and a bear crushed a third, I was expecting what came: Clark announced that he could now take only two companions with him in the spring: Wilson and Mew.

So once more I witnessed David Wilson's complacent smile of malice.

Then we settled into our second winter-quarters: again December, and all that moodiness and dreariment of our sunless gloom, made worse by the fact that the windmill would not work, leaving us frequently without electricity.

Ah me, none but those who have experienced it could dream one half the mental depression of that Arctic dark; how the soul takes on the hue of the universe; and without and within is nothing but gloom, gloom, and the rule of the Power of Darkness. Not one of us but was in a melancholic, dismal and dire mood; and on the 19th December Lamburn, the engineer, stabbed Cartwright, the old harpooner, in the arm.

Three days before Christmas a bear came close to the ship, then turned tail; upon which Mew, Wilson, I and Meredith (a general hand) set out in pursuit; but after a pretty long chase lost him; then scattered different ways. It was very dim, and after yet an hour's search I was returning tired and dispirited to the ship, when I spied some shape like a bear sailing away on my left, and at the same time sighted a man—I did not know whom—running like a handicapped ghost on my right. So I cried out: "There he is—come on this way."

The man quickly joined me, but, as soon as ever he recognised me, stopped dead, and the devil must have suddenly got into him, for he said: "No, thanks, Jeffson: alone with you I am in danger of my life. . . ."

It was Wilson. And I, too, forgetting at once all about the bear, stopped and faced him.

"I see," said I. "But, Wilson, you are going to explain to me *now* what you mean, you hear? What *do* you mean, Wilson?"

"What I say," he answered deliberately, eyeing me up and down: "Alone with you I am in danger of my life: just as poor Maitland was. Certainly, you are a deadly beast."

Frenzy leapt, my God, in my heart; dark as that darksome Arctic night was my mind.

"Do you mean," said I, "that I want to put you out of the way, in order to go in

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your place to the Pole? Is that your meaning, man?"

"That's about my meaning, Jeffson," says he: "you are a deadly beast, you know."

"All right!" I cried, with a blazing eye. "I am going to kill *you*, Wilson—as sure as God lives. *Look out, you!*"

I aimed my gun for his gizzard, I fingered the trigger; but he held up his left hand.

"Stop," he said, "stop." (He was ever one of the coolest of men.) "There is no gallows on the *Boreal*, but Clark could easily rig one for you. I want to kill you, too, because there are no criminal courts up here, and it would be doing a good action for my country; but not here—not now: listen to me—don't shoot. Later we can meet, when all is ready, so that no one may be the wiser, and fight it all out."

As he spoke, I let the gun drop: it was better so. I knew that he was much the best shot on the ship, and I an indifferent one: but I did not care if I was killed.

It is a dim, inclement land, God knows; and the spirit of darkness and distraction is there. . . .

Twenty hours later we met behind the great saddle-shaped hummock, some six miles to the S. E. of the ship; had set out at different times, so that no one might suspect; and each brought a ship's lantern.

Wilson had dug an ice-grave near the hummock, leaving at its edge a heap of brash-ice and snow to fill it; and, this grave between us, we stood separated by perhaps seventy yards, each with his lantern at his feet.

Even so we were just ghosts and shades to each other, the air glowering very drearily, and present in my inmost soul were frills of cold, a chill moon, a mere abstraction of sheen, seeming to hang far outside the universe, the temperature at 54° below zero, so that we had on wind-clothes over our anoraks, and heavy foot-bandages under our Lap-boots. Nothing but a weird morgue seemed the world, haunted with despondent madness; and exactly like that world round us were the bosoms of us two poor men, full of macabre, bleak, and funereal feelings.

Between us yawned an early grave for one or other of our bodies; and I heard Wilson cry out: "Are you ready, Jeffson?"

"Aye, Wilson!" I cried.

"Then, here goes!" cries he.

As he spoke, he fired: surely, the man was in earnest to kill me.

But his shot passed by me, as indeed was only likely, for we were shadows to each other.

I fired perhaps five seconds later than he: but in those five seconds he stood brightly revealed to me in clear lilac light: for an Arctic fireball had shot across the sky, showering abroad a phosphorous shine over the snow-landscape.

Before the intenser blue of its momentary glamour had passed away I saw Wilson stagger forward, and drop. And him and his lantern I buried there under the rubble ice.

* * *

ON the 13th March, nearly three months later, Clark, Mew and I left the *Boreal* in latitude 85° 15′.

We had with us thirty-two dogs, three sledges, three kayaks, human provisions for 112 days, and dog provisions for 40. Being now about 340 miles from the Pole, we hoped to reach it in 43 days, then, turning south, and, feeding living dogs with dead, make either Franz Josef Land or Spitzbergen, at which latter place we should very likely come up with a whaler.

Well, during the first days progress was very slow, the ice being rough and laney, and the dogs behaving most badly, stopping dead at every difficulty, and leaping over the traces. Clark had had the idea of attaching a goldbeater's-skin balloon, with a lifting power of 35 pounds, to each sledge, and we had with us a supply of zinc and acid to repair the hydrogen-waste from the bags; but on the third day Mew over-filled and burst his balloon, whereupon Clark and I had to cut ours loose to equalise weights: so at the end of the fourth day out we had made only nineteen miles, and could still from a hummock perceive afar the leaning masts of the old *Boreal*. Clark led on ski, captaining a sledge with 400 lbs of instruments, ammunition, pemmican, aleuronate bread; Mew followed, his sledge containing provisions only; and last came I, with a mixed freight. But on the fourth day Clark had an attack of snow-blindness, and Mew took his place.

* * *

Pretty soon our sufferings commenced, and they were bitter enough: the sun, though constantly visible day and night, gave no heat; our sleeping-bags (Clark and Mew slept together in one, I in another) were soaking wet all the night, being thawed by our warmth; and our fingers, under wrappings of sennegrass and wolf-skin, were always bleeding.

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Sometimes our frail bamboo-cane kayaks, lying across the sledges, would crash perilously against an ice-ridge—our one hope of reaching land; but the dogs were the great difficulty: we lost six mortal hours a day in harnessing and tending them. On the twelfth day Clark took a single-altitude observation, and found that we were only in latitude 86° 45′; but the next day we passed beyond the farthest point yet (authentically) attained—by the *Nix*.

* * *

Our secret thought now was food, food—our day-long lust for the eating-time. Mew suffered from "Arctic thirst."

* * *

Under such conditions man becomes in a few days, not a savage only, but a brute, scarcely a grade above the bear and walrus. . . . Ah, the ice! A sordid nightmare was that, God knows. After the eleventh day our rate of march improved, all lanes disappearing, ridges becoming much less frequent. By the fifteenth day I was leaving behind me the ice-grave of David Wilson at the rate of from ten to twelve miles a day.

Yet, as it were, his arm reached out and touched me, even there.

His disappearance had been explained by a hundred different guesses on the ship—all plausible enough: I had no idea that anyone connected me in any way with his death.

But on our twenty-second day of march, 140 miles from our goal, he caused a conflagration of rage and hate to break out among us three.

It was at the end of a march when our stomachs were hollow, our frames ready to drop, and our mood ravenous and inflamed. One of Mew's dogs was sick: it was necessary to kill it; he asked me to do it.

"Oh," I said, "you kill your own dog, of course."

"Well, I don't know," he replied, catching fire at once, "you ought to be used to killing, Jeffson."

"How do you mean, Mew?" I asked, with a mad start, for madness and the lamps of Hell were prompt and ready in us all! "You mean because my profession- "

"Profession, damn it, no," he snarled like a dog; "go and dig up David Wilson—I dare say you know where to find him—*he'll* tell you my meaning, right enough."

I rushed at once to Clark, who was stooping among the dogs unharnessing, and savagely pushing his shoulder, I exclaimed: "That beast accuses me of murdering David Wilson!"

"Well?" says Clark.

"I'd split his skull as clean—!"

"Go away, Adam Jeffson, and let me be!" Clark snarled.

"Is that all you've got to say about it, then, you?" I asked.

"To the devil with you, man, say I, and let me be!" he cried: *"you know your own conscience best,* I suppose."

Before this insult I stood with grinning teeth, but impotent, though from that moment a still grimmer mood of malignity brooded in my spirit; and indeed the humour of each of us three was imbued with a certain dangerous, even murderous, rage: for in that region of chill we had become assimilated to the beasts that perish.

* * *

On the 10th of April we passed the 89th parallel, and, though sick to death, both in spirit and body, pressed still on. Like the lower animals we were smitten now with dumbness, and hardly once a day mumbled a syllable one to the other; but in selfish brutishness on through a hell of cold we moved. It is damned territory, not to be penetrated by man: and rapid and deplorable was the degeneration of our souls. As for me, never could I have imagined that savagery so heinous could brood in a human bosom as now I felt it brood in mine. If men could enter a country specially set apart for the habitation of devils, and there become possessed of evil, as we were so would they be.

* * *

As we advanced, the ice every day became smoother: so that, from four miles a day, our rate increased to fifteen, and finally (as the sledges lightened) to twenty.

It was now that we began to encounter a succession of strange-looking objects lying scattered across the ice, whose number continually increased as we proceeded, objects having the appearance of rocks, or pieces of iron-ore, incrusted with glass-like fragments, which we discovered to be precious stones. On our second twenty-mile day Clark picked up a diamond-splinter as large as a child's thumb, and such objects became common.

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We thus found "wealth," beyond dream; but as the bear and the walrus find, and for all those millions we would not have given an ounce of fish-meal. Clark grumbled something about their being meteor-stones, whose ferruginous substance had been lured that way by the Pole's magnetism, and kept from frictional ignition in their passage through the air by the frigidity there: but as the Pole's H is not strong, my own view is that they are due to the greater drag of gravity and the much greater shallowness of the atmosphere there; anyway, they quickly ceased to interest our sluggish brains, except in so far as they obstructed our way.

* * *

We had all along had excellent weather, till, on the morning of the 12th of April, we were overtaken by a storm from the S. W. of such monstrous and solemn volume, that the heart quailed under it. It lasted in its full power only an hour, but during that time snatched two of our sledges far away, and compelled us to lie face-downward. As we had travelled all the sun-lit night, we were gasping with fatigue: so, as soon as the wind allowed us to huddle together our scattered things, we collapsed into the sleeping-bags, and instantly slept.

We knew that the ice was in fearful upheaval round us; we knew, as our eyelids sweetly closed, of a slow booming as of distant cannon, and brittle cracklings of musketry. This may have been a result of the tempest rumpling-up the sea beneath the ice; whatever it was, we did not care: we slept deep.

We were within nine miles of the Pole.

* * *

In my dream it was as though some messenger shook my shoulder with an urgent "Up! Up!"; nor was it either Clark or Mew, for Clark and Mew, when I started up, lay there in their sleeping-bag.

I suppose it must have been about noon. There I sat staring some minutes, that urging, *"Be first!"* profoundly suggested in my spirit, as if whispered within my inwards: and instinctively, brutishly, as the Gadarean swine rushed down a steep place, I, rubbing my daft eyes, arose.

The first thing which my mind opened to note was that, while the tempest was less strong, the ice was at present in extraordinary agitation, I looking abroad upon a plain stretched out to a waving horizon, varied by hillocks, boulders, and glimmering meteor-stones that everywhere tinselled the blinding white, some big as wire-guns, most little as limbs; and this vast plain was at present rearranging itself in a far-spread drama of havoc, withdrawing in chasms like mutual backing curtsies, then surging to clap together in passionate mountain-peaks, else jostling like the Symplegades, nimbly inconstant as billows of the sea, grinding itself, piling itself, pouring itself in downfalls of powdered ice, while here and there I saw the meteor-stones leap spasmodically, in dusts and heaps, like geysers or hopping froths in a steamer's wake, all the trumpets of uproar, meanwhile, occupying the air. In standing, I tripped and staggered, and saw all the dogs sprawling, with whimperings of misery.

I did not care. Instinctively, daftly, brutishly, I harnessed ten of them to my sledge; put on Canadian snowshoes: and was away northward—alone.

The sun shone with a clear, benign, but heatless shining, a ghostly, remote, yet limpid light, which seemed designed for the lighting of other planets and systems, and to strike here by happy chance. A wild wind from the S. W., meanwhile, flung thin snow sweepings flying northward past me.

My odometer had not yet measured four miles, when I commenced to note two things: one that the meteor-stones were now accumulating beyond limit, filling my field of vision to the northern horizon with blinding brightness, lying in piles, in parterres, like largesse of autumn leaves, so that I had need to steer my feet among them; now, too, I noticed that, but for these stones, all roughness had disappeared, not a trace of the upheaval going on a few miles south being here: for the ice lay nearly as smooth as a table before me, and it is my belief that this stretch of smooth ice has never, never, felt shock or throe, but reaches right down to the bottom of the deep.

* * *

And now with a wild hilarity I flew, for a lunacy, a giddiness, had got me, until finally, up-bouyed on air, dancing mad, I sped, I span, with grinning teeth that chattered and gibbered, and eyeballs of distraction: for a fright, too—most cold, most mighty high—had its hand of ice on my soul, I being alone in that place, face to face with the Ineffable; but still, with a gibbering

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levity, and a fatal joy, and a blind hilarity, on I sped, I span.

* * *

The odometer measured nine miles from my start: I was in the neighbourhood of the Pole.

I cannot say when it began, but now I was conscious of a sound in my ears, clear and near, a steady sound of splashing, or fluttering, resembling the noising of a cascade or brook; and it grew. Forty more steps I took (skate I could not now for the meteorites)—perhaps eight—perhaps a hundred: and now, to my sudden horror, I stood looking at a lake.

One minute, swaying and nodding there, I stood, then dropped down flat in swoon.

* * *

In a hundred years, I suppose, I should never succeed in analysing *why* I swooned: but my consciousness still retains the impression of that horrid thrill. I saw nothing distinctly, for my being reeled and toppled drunken, like a spinning-top in desperate death-struggle at the instant when it flags, and wobbles dissolutely to fall; but the moment my eyes lighted on what lay before me—a lake, circular, clean-cut—I felt, I fathomed, that here was the sanctuary, here the eternal secret of this earth from her birth, which it was a burning shame for a worm to see. The lake, I think, would be something like a mile wide, and in its middle is a pillar of ice, low and thick; and I had the impression, or dream, or fantasy, that there is a name inscribed round in the ice of the pillar in characters that could never be read; and under the name a lengthy date; and the liquid of the lake seemed to me to be wheeling with a shivering ecstasy, splashing and fluttering, round the pillar, from west to east, with the planet's spin; and it was borne in upon me—can't say how—that this fluid was the substance of a living being; and I had the fancy, as my senses failed, that it was a being with many eyes, dull, repining, and that, as it swept fluttering eagerly for ever round, it kept its gazes riveted on the name and the date graven in the pillar. But some of this must be my madness. . . .

* * *

It must have been not less than an hour before a sense of life arose again in me; and when the thought broke in upon my brain that a long, long time I had lain there in the presence of those gloomy orbs, my spirit groaned and died within me.

In some minutes, however, I had scrambled on my legs, caught at a dog's harness, and without one backward glance was escaping from that place.

Half-way to the halting-place I awaited Clark and Mew, being very sick and doddering, and unable to advance. But they did not come.

Later on, when I gathered force to go farther, I found that they had perished in the upheaval of the ground. One only of the sledges, half buried, I saw near the spot of our bivouac.

* * *

Alone the same day I began my way southward, and for four days made good progress. On the seventh day I noticed, stretched right across the south-eastern horizon, a region of vapour which luridly obscured the face of the sun; purple it looked, and day after day I observed it steadily brooding there; but what it could be I did not know.

* * *

Well, onward through the desert I went my solitary way, with a quailing terror in me: for very stupendous, alas, is the load of that Polar lonesomeness on one poor human soul.

Often on a halt I have lain and listened long to the hollow stillness, recoiling, appalled by it, longing that at least one of the dogs might whimper; I have even crawled quivering from the thawed sleeping-bag to flog a dog, so that I might hear a voice.

* * *

I had started from the Pole with a well-filled sledge, and with the sixteen dogs left alive from the ice-packing which had engulfed my comrades, having saved from the wreck of our things most of the whey-powder, pemmican, &c., as well as the theodolite, compass, chronometer, train-oil lamp for cooking, and other implements: I was therefore in no doubt as to my course, and had provisions for eighty days; but ten days from the start my stock of dog-food failed: I had to begin to slaughter my companions, one by one; and in the third week, when the ice became horribly rough, with enough moil and toil to wear a bear

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to death I did only five miles a day. After the day's work I would creep with a dying sigh into the sleeping-bag, clothed still in the load of skins which stuck to me a mere filth of grease, to sleep the sleep of a pig, indifferent if I never woke.

And ever—day after day—about the south-eastern heaven brooded heavily that curious region of purple vapour, streaming like the smoke of the conflagration of the world, its length steadily growing.

* * *

Once I had a pretty agreeable dream—dreamed that I was in a garden—an Arab paradise—sweet to breathe; yet—all the time—I had a sub-consciousness of the storm which was acutally blowing from the S. E. over the ice, and at the moment when I awoke was half-wittedly mumbling to myself: "It is a garden of peaches; but I am not really in the garden: I am really in the Arctic; only, the S. E. gusts are wafting to me the aroma of this garden of peaches."

I opened my eyes—I started—I sprang to my feet! For, mad as I was, I could not doubt—an actual aroma like peach-blossom was in the algid air about me!

Before I could collect my astonished senses I began to vomit violently, and at the same time saw some of the dogs, skeletons as they were, vomiting also; then for a long time I lay sick in a kind of daze; and, on getting up, found three of the dogs dead, and all very queer. The wind had now changed to the north.

Well, on I stumbled, fighting each inch of my deplorably weary way, this odour of peach-blossom, my sickness, and the death of the three dogs, remaining a wonder to me.

Two days later I came across a bear and her cub lying dead at the foot of a hummock, and could not believe my eyes: there she lay, a spot of dirty-white in a disordered patch of snow, with one little eye open, and her fierce-looking mouth also; and the cub lay across her haunch, biting into her rough fur. So I set to work upon her, and allowed the dogs a glorious feed on the blubber, while I myself had a banquet on the fresh meat; but then had to leave the greater part of the carcasses, and I can feel again now the hankering reluctance with which I trudged onwards. Again and again I found myself asking: "Now, what could have killed those two bears?"

With brutish stolidness I plodded ever on, almost like a walking machine, sometimes nodding in sleep, while I helped the dogs, or maneuvered the sledge over an ice-ridge, pushing or pulling. On the 3rd of June, a month and a half from my start, I took an observation with the theodolite, and found that I was not yet 400 miles from the Pole, in altitude 84° 50′. It was as though some will was obstructing me.

However, the intolerable cold was over, and soon my clothes no longer hung stark on me like armour; pools began to appear in the ice, and presently, what was worse, my God, long lanes, across which, somehow, I had to get the sledge. But about the same time all fear of starvation passed away: for on the 6th of June I came across another dead bear, on the 7th three, and thence forth, in rapidly growing numbers, I met, not bears only, but fulmars, guillemots, snipes, Ross's gulls, little awks—all, all, lying dead on the ice, never anywhere a living thing, save me, and the two remaining dogs; and if ever a poor man stood shocked before a mystery, it was I now.

On the 2nd of July the ice began packing dangerously, and soon another storm broke lose upon me from the S. W. so I left off my trek; put up the silk tent on a five-acre square of ice surrounded by lanes; and it was there that *again*—for the second time—as I lay down, I smelled that delightful strange odour of peach-blossom, a mere whiff and presently was taken sick. However, it passed off in half an hour.

Now it was all lanes, lanes, alas, yet no open water, and such was the drudgery and woe of my life, that sometimes I would drop prostrate upon the ice, sobbing "Oh, no more, my God, here let me die." The crossing of a lane might occupy ten, twelve hours, and then, on the other side, I might find another one opening right before me. Moreover, on the 9th of July, one of the dogs, after a feed on blubber, suddenly died, leaving me only "Reinhardt," a white-haired Siberian dog, with little brisk up-sticking ears, like a cat's; and him also I had to kill on coming to open water.

This did not happen till the 3rd of August, nearly four months from the Pole.

I can't think, my God, that any soul of man ever tholed that dismal incubus or that abysm of sensations within which, during those four months, I weltered: for, though I was as a brute, I had a man's heart to smart. What I had seen, or dreamed, at the Pole followed and followed me; and, if I shut my eyes to sleep, those other eyes yonder seemed to watch me again with their distraught and gloomy

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gaze, and in my dark dreams reeled that everlasting ecstasy of the lake.

However, by the 28th of July I knew from the look of the sky, and the absence of fresh-water ice, that the sea could not be far: so I set to business, and spent two days in putting to rights the now battered kayak. This done, I had no sooner resumed my way than I sighted on the horizon a streaky haze, which could only be the cliffs of Franz Josef Land; and in a craziness of jubiliation I stood there, waving my ski-staff round my head, with the senile cheers of an aged man.

In three days this land was visibly nearer, sheer basaltic cliff mixed with glacier, forming apparently a great bay, with three islands in the mid-distance; and at dawn of the 5th of August I arrived at the definite limit of the pack-ice in moderate weather near the freezing-point.

At once, but with great reluctance, I shot Reinhardt, then set to getting the last of the provisions, and the most necessary of the implements, into the kayak, making haste to put out to the luxury of being borne on water after all the trudge; and within fourteen hours was coasting, with my little lug-sail bulged, along the shore-ice of that land: the midnight of a calm Sabbath; and low down on the horizon smoked the ruddy sun-ball drowsing, as my canvas skiff lightly chipped her passage through that silent sea. Silent, silent: for neither snort of walrus, nor wawl of fox, nor screech of kittiwake, did I hear: but all was still as the jet-black shadow of cliff and glacier on the sea; and many corpses of dead things swarmed on the face of the water.

* * *

When I found a fjord I wound up it to the end, where stood a stretch of basalt columns, looking like a shattered temple of Antediluvians; and when my foot at last touched land, I dropped there bowed down a long, long while in the rubbly snow, and silently wept, my eyes that night a fountain of tears: for the firm land is health and sanity, and dear to the life of man, but the ice is a nightmare, and a blasphemy, and a madness, and the realm of the Power of Darkness.

* * *

I knew that I was at Franz Josef Land somewhere in the neighborhood of C. Fligely (about 82° N.); and, though it was so late, and getting cold, I still had the hope of reaching Spitzbergen that year, by alternately navigating the open sea and dragging the kayak over the slack drift-ice. As all the ice which I saw was good flat fjord-ice, the plan appeared feasible enough; so, after coasting about a little, and then three days' rest in the tent at the bottom of a ravine of columnar basalt opening upon the shore, I packed some bear and walrus flesh, with what artificial food was left, into the kayak, and set out in the morning, coasting the shore-ice with sail and paddle until the afternoon.

Then, on managing to climb a little way up an iceberg, I made out that I was in a bay whose terminating headlands were invisible: so I determined to make straight S.W. by W. to cross it; but, in doing so, I was hardly out of sight of land when a northern storm overtook me toward midnight, and, before I could think, the little sail was all but whiffed away, the kayak upset. I only saved it by the happy chance of being near a floe with an ice-foot, which, jutting out under the waves, gave me foothold; and on the floe I lay in a mooning state the whole night through under the tempest's piping, for I was half drowned.

Happily, my instruments, etc., had been saved by the kayak-deck when she capsized: but I now abandoned all thought of whalers and of Europe for that year.

* * *

A hundred yards inland from the shore-rim, in a place where there was some moss and soil, I built myself a semi-subterranean Eskimo-den for the Polar night, the spot surrounded by high walls of basalt, except to the west, where they opened in a cleft to the coast, the ground strewn with slabs and boulders of granite and basalt, in three places the snow red, overgrown with a lichen which at first I took for blood; and I found in there a dead she-bear, two cubs, and a fox, the last fallen from the cliffs; but I did not even yet feel secure from possible bears, and took care to make my den fairly tight, a job which occupied me nearly four weeks: for I had no tools, save a hatchet, knife, and metal-shod ski-staff.

I dug a passage in the ground two feet wide, two deep, ten long, with perpendicular sides, and at its north end I dug a round space, twelve feet across, with perpendicular sides, which I lined with rocks;

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the whole excavation I covered with walrus-hide, inch-thick, skinned during a bitter week from four of a number which lay about the shore-ice; and for ridge-pole I used a rock-splinter which I found, though, even so, the roof remained nearly flat. This, when finished, I stocked well, putting in everything, except the kayak, blubber both for fuel and occasional light, and foods of several kinds, procured by just stretching out the hand. The roof of both round part and passage was soon buried under snow, and hardly distinguishable from the general level of the ground; and through the passage, if I passed in or out, I prowled on hands and knees; but that was seldom: and within the little round interior, mostly seated, cowering, with quiverings, I wintered, hearkening to the mouthings of darkling storms that bawled about my forolornness.

* * *

All those months the burden of a thought bowed me, and a question like the slow turning of a mechanism worked in my melancholy soul: for everywhere round lay bears, walrus, foxes, thousands upon thousands of little awks, kittiwakes, snow-owls, eider-ducks, gulls—dead; almost the only living things which I saw being some walruses on the drift-floes, but very few of these: and it was clear to me that some inconceivable catastrophe had overtaken the island during the summer, destroying all life about it, except some few of the amphibia, cetacea, and crustacea.

On the 7th of December, having crept out from the den during a southern tempest, I had, for the third time, a distinct whiff of that self-same smell of peach-blossoms; but now without any after effects.

* * *

Well, again came Christmas, the New year—Spring: and on the 22nd of May I set out with a well-stocked kayak, the water now fairly open, and the ice so good, that at one place I could sail the kayak over it, the wind sending me sliding at a fine pace. Being on the west coast of Franz Josef Land, I was in as favorable a situation as could be, and I bent my bow southward with much hope, keeping for days just in sight of land; but toward nightfall of my fourth day out, on noticing a floe that presented a lovey sight, looking freighted with a profusion of roses which it reflected within its crystal I went to it, and saw it covered with millions of Ross's gulls, all dead, whose rosy bosoms had given it that bloom.

Well, up to the 29th of June I made good progress southward and westward, the weather mostly excellent, I sometimes coming on dead bears floating away on floes, sometimes on dead or living walrus-herds, with troop after troop of dead kittiwakes, glaucus and ivory gulls, skuas, every kind of Arctic fowl; and on that last day—the 29th—as I was about to encamp on a floe soon after midnight, happening to look toward the sun, my eye fell upon something far away south across the ocean of floes—*the masts of a ship.*

A phantom ship, or a real ship: it was all one to me; real, I must instantly have felt, it could hardly be; but at a sight so wild my heart set to beating as though I must die, and feebly waving the cane oar above my head, I collapsed upon my knees, and thence toppled flat.

So overpoweringly sweet was the prospect of a springing once more, like the beast of Circe, from a walrus into a European: for at this time I was tearing my bear's meat just like a bear, was washing my hands in walrus-blood, to give them a glairy sort of pink cleanness in place of the inky grease that chronically smeared them.

And, worn as I was, I made little delay to set out for that ship; nor had I travelled over water and ice four hours when, to my indescribable joy, I made out from the top of a tallish floe that she was the *Boreal.*

It seemed most strange that she should be anywhere hereabouts! I could only conclude that she must have forced and drifted her way thus far westward out of the ice-block in which our party had left her, and perhaps now was loitering here in the hope of picking us up on our way to Spitzbergen.

In any case, crazy was the rage with which I fought my way to be at her, my gasping lips all the time drawn back in a rictus of laughter at the anticipation of their gladness to see me, of their excitement on hearing the grand tidings of the Pole attained, I anon waving the paddle, although I knew that they could not yet spy me, and then I lashed wildly at the whitish water. What astonished me was her mainsail and foremost squaresail—set that calm morning, her screws still, for she moved not at all there under a sun which was abroad like a cold spirit of light, touching the ocean-room of floes with blinding

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spots, a tint almost of rose touching all things, as it were of a just-dead bride in her brilliants and white array, the *Boreal* the one little ink-black spot in all this purity: and upon her, as though she were paradise, I paddled, I panted.

But she was in a queerish state: by 9 a. m. I could see that: two of the windmill-arms not there, and, half-lowered down her starboard beam, a boat hanging askew; moreover, soon after 10, I could see that her mainsail had a rent down the middle. And I could not at all make her out: she was not anchored, though a sheet-anchor was hanging at the starboard cathead; she was not moored; and two small ice-floes, one on each side, were idly bombarding her bows.

I began now to wave the paddle again, battling for my breath, ecstatic, crazy with excitement, each second like a year to me; and when I could now make out someone at the bows, bending well over, looking my way, and something put it into my head that it was Sallit, I set to mouthing an impassioned shouting of "Hi! Sallitt! Hallo! Hi!"

I did not see him move, but there he stood, leaning steadily over, looking my way, between me and the ship now being all navigable sea among the ice-floes, and the sight of him so visibly near put into me such a shivering of eagerness, that I was nothing less than demented for the time, sending the kayak flying with venomous digs in sprints, mixing with the diggings my crazy wavings, and with both a hullabaloo of bellowings: "Hallo! Hi! Bravo! *I have been to the Pole!*"

Well, vanity, vanity. Nearer still I drew: broad morning now, going on toward noon, I half a mile away, fifty yards; but on board the *Boreal*, though now they *must* have heard me, seen me, I observed no movement of welcome, but all, all was still as death that still Arctic morning, my God; only, the ragged canvas flapped languidly, and, one on each side, two ice-floes sluggishly bombarded the bows, with dumb sounds.

I was sure now that Sallit it was who looked across the sea, but when the ship swung a little round, I noticed that the direction of his gaze was carried with her movement, he no longer looking my way; and, "Why, Sallit!" I shouted with reproach at him: "why, Sallit, man!" I whined.

But, even as I shouted and whined, a perfect wild certaintly was in me: for a perfume like peach, my God, had now been whiffed from the ship upon me, and I must have very well known then that that watchful outlook of Sallit saw nothing, but on the *Boreal* were dead men all; in fact, I soon saw one of his eyes looking like a glass eye when it slides awry and glares all distraught; and then again my body failed, and my head dropped forward, where I sat, upon the kayak's deck.

* * *

Well, after a long while I started up to look anew at that forlorn and wandering craft: there she lay, quiet, tragic, as it were culpable of the dark cargo of fatality which she bore; there stared Sallit: and I knew quite well why he was there—had leant over to vomit, and had leant ever since, his forearms propped upon the bulwark-beam, his left knee pressing on the boards, his left shoulder propped upon the cathead, his face shaking in response to every bump of the two floes upon the bows, nodding a little, he, strange to say, having no covering on his head, and I noted the play of the zephyrs in his uncut hair. Now I would approach no more, for I was afraid, I did not dare, the stillness of the ship was so sacred; and until late afternoon I sat there watching the black bulk of her hull, watching above her water-line a half-floating fringe of seaweed, proving old sleepiness.

An attempt had apparently been made to lower, or take in, the larch-wood pram, for there she hung by a jammed davit-rope, stern up, bow in water; the only two arms of the windmill were moving this way and that, through some three degrees, creaking with an *andante* sing-song; some clothes, tied on the bow-sprit rigging to dry, were still there; the iron casing round the bluff bows now red and rough with rust; at several places the rigging in considerable tangle; the boom occasionally moving through the sector of a circle with a tormented skirling cadence; and the sail, rotten, I suppose, from exposure—for she had certainly encountered no heavy weather—gave out anon a ponderous languid flap at a rent down the centre. Except Sallit, looking out there where he had jammed himself, I saw no one.

By a paddle-stroke now, and another presently, I had closely approached her about four in the afternoon, though my awe of the vessel was complicated by that perfume of hers, whose baleful effects I knew. My tentative approach, however,

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proved to me, when I remained unaffected, that, here and now, whatever danger there had been was past; and at last, by a hanging rope, with a thumping desperation of heart, I clambered up her beam.

* * *

They had died, it seemed, quite suddenly, for almost all of the twelve were in attitudes of activity: Egan in the very act of ascending the companion-way, Lamburn sitting against the chart-room door, apparently cleaning two carbines, Odling at the bottom of the engine-room stair seemed to be drawing on a pair of reindeer komagar, and Cartwright, who was often in liquor, had his arms frozen tight round the neck of Martin, whom he seemed to be kissing, they two lying stark at the foot of the mizzen-mast.

Over all—over men, decks, rope-coils—in the cabin, in the engine-room—between skylight leaves—on every shelf, in each cranny, lay an ash or dust, impalpably fine, purplish; and, steadily reigning through the ship, like the very spirit of death, that perfume of peach.

* * *

Here it had reigned, as I could see from the log-dates, from the rust on the machinery, from the look of the bodies, from a hundred indications, during something over a year: it was, therefore, mainly by the wayward workings of winds and currents that this mortal ship had been brought hither to me.

And this was the first overt intimation which I had that that Power (whoever and whatever It or They may be), which through history had been so very careful to conceal Its Hand from men, hardly any longer intended to be at the pains to conceal Its Hand from *me:* for it was just as though the *Boreal* had been openly presented to me by an Agency which, though I could not see, I could readily apprehend.

* * *

The dust, though quite thin and flighty above-decks, was lying thickly deposited below; and, after having made a tour of investigation, the first thing which I did was to examine that—though I had tasted nothing all day, and was exhausted to death. I found my own microscope where I had left it in the box in my berth to

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starboard, though I had to lift up Egan to get at it, and to step over Lamburn to enter the chart-room; but in there, toward evening, I sat at the table and bent to see if I could make anything of the dust, while it seemed to me as if the myriad spirits of men that have sojourned on the earth, and angel and devil, and Time and Eternity, hung silent round for my verdict: and such an ague had me, that for a long while my wandering finger-tips, all ataxic with agitation, eluded every delicate effort which I made, and I could nothing do.

Of course, I knew that an odour of peach-blossom, resulting in death, could only be associated with an effluvium of cyanogen, or of hydrocyanic ("prussic") acid, or of both: so when I at last managed to examine some of the dust, I was not surprised to find among the mass of ash some yellow crystals which could only be potassic ferrocyanide. What potassic ferrocyanide was doing on board the *Boreal* I did not know, nor had I either the means, or the force of mind, to dive then deeper into it; I understood only that by some means the air of the region just south of the Polar environ had been impregnated with a gas which was either cyanogen, or some product of cyanogen; also, that this gas, which is very soluble, had by now either been dissolved by the sea, or else dispersed into space, leaving its faint perfume; and, seeing this, I let my abandoned head drop upon the table, and long I sat there staring crazy: for I had a suspicion, my God, and a fear, in me.

* * *

The *Boreal*, I found, contained sufficient provisions, untouched by the dust, in cases, casks, &c., to last me, probably, forty years: for after two days, when I had scrubbed and boiled some of the filth of fifteen months from my skin, and solaced myself with better food, I overhauled her thoroughly; then spent three more days in oiling and cleaning the engine; then, all being ready, dragged my twelve dead and laid them together in two rows on the chart-room floor; which done, I hoisted for love the poor little kayak which had served me through so many tribulations; and at nine in the morning of the 6th of July, a week from my first sighting of the *Boreal*, I descended to the engine-room to set out.

The screws, in the modern way, were driven by a stream of liquid air exploding through capillary tubes into slide-valve chests, a motor which gave her, in spite of her bluff bulk, sixteen knots; and it is the simplest thing for one to take these crafts round the globe, since their starting depends upon nothing but the depressing of a lever, provided that one does not get blown to the sky, as liquid air, in spite of its ten blessings, does blow people. At any rate, I had tanks of air to last me through twelve years' voyaging, and there was the machine for making it, with forty tons of coal, in case of need, in the bunkers, and the two Belleville boilers, so that I was well off for motors.

The ice, too, was quite slack here, and I do not believe I ever saw Arctic weather so bright and blithe, the temperature at 41°. I found that I was midway between Franz Josef and Spitzbergen, in lat. 79° 23′, long. 39°; my way was clear; and something like a mournful hopefulness was in me, as the engines slid into their rhythmic turmoil, and those screws started to churn the Arctic sea, while I, darting up, took my stand at the wheel: and the bows of my bark bent southward and westward.

* * *

When I neded food or sleep, the vessel slept, too; then went on her way anew.

Sixteen hours a day sometimes I stood sentinel at the wheel, overlooking the varied sameness of the ice-sea, until my knees would give, some delicate steering being frequently required among the floes and bergs, I by now, however, less burdened with my ball of Polar clothes, standing almost slim in a Lap great-coat, a round Siberian fur-cap on my head.

At midnight when I flung myself into my old berth, it was just as though the engines, subsided now into silence, were a dead thing, and had a ghost that haunted me, for I heard them still, and yet not them, but the silence of their ghost; and often I would startle from sleep, horrified to the heart at some sound of exploding iceberg, or bumping floe, noising far through that white mystery of quietude, within which the floes and bergs were like floating tombs, the world a liquid churchyard; nor ever could I be able to express the strange Doomsday shock with which such a booming would recall me from depths of chaos to recollection of myself: for oftentimes, both waking and in nightmare, I did not know on which orb I was, nor in which age, but felt my being adrift in the great gulf of space and eternity and circumstance, with no bottom for my consciousness to stand upon, the world all mirage and a strange show to me, and the

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frontiers of dream and waking quite lost.

Well, the weather was most fair all the time, and the sea like a pond. During the morning of the fifth day, the 11th of July, I entered, and went moving down, an extraordinary long avenue of snowbergs and floes, most regularly placed, half a mile perhaps across and miles long, like a Titanic double-procession of statues, or the Ming Tombs, but mounting and sinking as to music on the swell, some towering high, throwing placid shadows on the aisle between, many being of a pellucid emerald hue, three or four pouring down waterfalls which wawled a far and chaunting sound, the sea of a singular thickness, almost like egg-white, while, as always there, some snow-clouds, white and woolly, floated in the pale sky: and down this aisle, which produced a mysterious impression of Cyclopean cathedrals and queer sequesteredness, I had hardly passed a mile, when I sighted a black object at its end.

I rushed to the shrouds, soon made out a whaler: and anew the same panting agitations, rage to be at her, at once possessed me, as I flew to the indicator, put the lever at full, then back to give the wheel a spin, then up the mainmast ratlins, waving a foot-bandage of vadmel tweed snatched up at random; and by the time I was within five hundred yards of her had lashed myself to such a pitch of passion, that I was anew shouting that futile lunacy:

"Hullo! Hi! Bravo! *I have been to the Pole!*" and those twelve dead that I had there in the chart-room must have heard me, and the men on the whaler must have heard me, and smiled their smile.

For, as to that whaler, I should have known better at once, if I had not been doting, since she *looked* like a ship of death, her boom slamming to port or to starboard on the heave of the sea, her foresail reefed that serene forenoon; but only when I was almost upon her, and was rushing down to stop the engine, did the real truth suddenly drench my heated brain; and I nearly ran into her, I was so stunned.

Later I lowered the kayak, and boarded her. . . .

This ship had been stricken into stillness in the thick of a briskness of activity, for I saw not one of her sixty-two who had not been busy, except one boy—a thing of 600 tons, shiprigged, with an auxiliary engine, armour-plated about the bows; and there was hardly any part of her which I did not overhaul. They had had a great time with whales, for a great carcass, attached to the ship's side by a cant-purchase tackle, had been in process of flensing and cutting-in, and on the deck were two blankets of blubber, looking a ton-weight, surrounded by twenty-seven men in many attitudes, some terrifying, some disgusting, several grotesque, the whale dead, and the men dead, too, and death was there, and the germs of non-entity flourishing, and a mesmerism, and a dumbness, whose realm was confirmed and its government growing old.

Four of them who had been removing the gums from a mass of stratified whalebone at the mizzenmast foot were quite imbedded in whale-flesh; also, in a barrel lashed to the main topgallant mast-head was visible the head of a man with a long-pointed beard, looking out over the sea to the S. W., which made me notice that five only of the probable eight or nine boats were on board; and after visiting the 'tween-decks, where I saw quantities of stowed whalebone-plates, and fifty or sixty oil-tanks, and cut-up blubber; and after visiting cabin, engine room, fo'cas'le, where I saw a lonely boy of fourteen whose hand was grasping a bottle of rum under the clothes in a box, he at the moment of death being intent upon concealing it—after two hours' search of the ship I returned to my own and started again, to come half an hour later upon all the three missing whale-boats about a mile apart: so I steered zigzag near, to find in each five men and a steerer, and one had the harpoon-gun fired, with the line coiled round and round the chest of the stroke line-manager; and in the others hundreds of fathoms of coiled rope, with toggle-irons, whale-lances, hand-harpoons, and dropped heads, and grins, and lazy abandon, and eyes that glared, and eyes that dozed, and eyes that winked.

* * *

After this I began to sight ships not infrequently, and used regularly to have the three lights going at night. On the 12th of July I met one, on the 15th two, on the 16th one, on the 17th three, on the 18th two—all Greenlands, I think: but of the nine I boarded only three, the glass revealing from afar that on the others was no life; and on the three dead men: so that that suspicion which I had, and that fear, grew heavy upon me.

I went on southward, day after day, sentinel there at the wheel: clear sunshine; the sea sometimes seeming mixed with regions of milk by day; and at night

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the immense desolation of a globe glimmered-on by a sun ages ago dead, and by a light that was gloom. It was like Night white in death then; and wan as the very realm of death and Hades I have beheld it, most terrifying, that neuter state and limbo of nothingness, when unreal sea and spectral vault, all confines lost, mingled in a void of ghostly phantasmagoria, pale to huelessness, at whose centre I, as it were annihilated, seemed to moon aswoon in immensity of space; into which disembodied world would be flirted anon whiffs of that perfume of peach which I knew, and their frequency grew; but onward the *Boreal* moved, traversing, as it were, bottomless Eternity, and I go to latitude 72°, not far now from Northern Europe.

And now, as to that peach-scent—even while some floes were yet round me—I was just like some fantastic mariner, who, having set out to seek for Eden and the Blessed Islands, finds them, and balmy gales from their gardens stream out, while he is yet afar, to greet him with their fragrances of almond and cornel, champac and jasmin and lotus: for, I have now reached a zone where the peach-aroma was constant, all the world seemed embalmed in its perfume, and I could imagine my bark to be journeying further than the earth's verge toward some clime of eternal spice and delightsomeness.

* * *

Well, I saw at last what whalers used to call "the blink of the ice"—its bright apparition or reflection in the sky when left behind, or not yet arrived at, by which time I was in a region where many craft of various kinds were to be seen; I was continually meeting them: and not one did I omit to investigate, while many I boarded in the kayak or the larch-wood pram.

Just below lat. 70° I came upon a fleet of what I believed to be Lafoden cod-and-herring fishers, which must have drifted somewhat on a northward current, all loaded with curing fish, and I cruised from one to the other on a zigzag course, they being widely scattered, some mere sand-grains to the glass on the horizon, the evening still and clear with that astral Arctic clarity, the sun just reclining to his low-couched nightly drowse. These brown boats stood rocking there with slow-creaking noises, as of creatures whining in sleep, quite unharmed so far, awaiting the gales of the winter's drama of wrath on that gloomy sea, when a darksome doom, and a deep grave, would not fail them.

The fishers were braw carles, having fringes of beard well back from the chin-point, and hanging woollen caps, one kneeling in a forward sprawling posture, clasping the lug-mast with his arms, his knees wide apart, head thrown back, the yellow eye-balls with their islands of grey iris staring straight up the mast-pole. In every case I found below-decks cruses of corn-brandy, marked *"aquavit,"* two of which I took into the pram; but at one boat, instead of boarding in the pram, I shut off the *Boreal's* liquid air at such a point, that, by delicate steering, she slackened down to a stoppage just a-beam of the smack, upon whose deck I was thus able to jump down; and after looking round I descended the three steps aft into the dark and garrety below-decks, to go with a bent back calling in a sort of whisper: *"Anyone? Anyone?;* but when I went up again the *Boreal* had drifted three yards beyond my reach, so, as there was a dead calm, I had to plunge into the water: and in that half-minute there such a sudden throng of terrors beset me! yes, I can feel again now that abysmal desolation of lonesomeness and sense of a hostile universe bent upon eating me up, for the ocean seemed to be nothing but a great ghost.

Two mornings later I came upon another school, rather larger boats these, which I discovered to be Brittany cod-fishers, and most of these, too, I boarded—in every belowdecks a wooden or earthenware image of "the Virgin," painted in gaudy faded daubs, in one boat a boy who had been kneeling before her, but was toppled sideways now, his knees still bent, the cross of Christ in his fist. These blue-woollen blouses and tarpaulin sou'-westers lay in every pose of death, every detail of feature and expression still perfectly preserved; the sloops all the same, all, all: with sing-song creaks they rocked a little, nonchalantly; each, as it were, with a subconsciousness of its own personality and callous unconsciousness of all the others round it, yet a copy of the others: the same hooks and lines, disembowelling-knives, barrels of salt and pickle, piles and casks of opened cod, kegs of biscuit, and creaky rockings, and a bilgy smell, and dead men.

The next day, about eighty miles south of the latitude of Mount Hekla, sighting a big ship, which proved to be the French cruiser *Lazare Tréport,* her, too, I boarded and overhauled during three hours, her upper, main, and armoured deck, deck by deck, to her black depths, even peeping up

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the tubes of her two rusted turret-guns. I saw three men in the engine-room mangled—after death, I presume—by a burst boiler; and I saw about 800 yards to the north-east a longboat of her crammed with marines, one oar still there, jammed between the row-lock and the rower's forced-back chin; while on the ship's port deck, in the stretch of space between the two masts, the blue-jackets had been piped up, for there they lay in a sort of serried disorder, two hundred.

Nothing could be of a suggestion more tragic than the helpless power of this poor wandering craft, round whose stolid mass myriads of wavelets, busy as aspen-leaves, bickered with a continuous weltering splash which kept chattering loud like sparrow-crowds. I sat a good time that afternoon in one of her casemates on a gun-carriage, my head sunken on my breast, furtively eyeing the blueish turned-up feet, shrunk, bloodless, of a sailor who lay before me, his soles being alone visible, since he lay head-downwards beyond the steel door-sill; and drenched in seas of lugubrious reverie I brooded there, till, with a shudder, I awoke, got back to the *Boreal,* and till sleep conquered me, went on my way. At nine the next morning, on coming on deck and spying to the west a group of craft, I turned my course upon them, and they turned out to be ten Shetland sixerns, which must have drifted north-eastward hither. I examined them well, but they were as the long catalogue of the others: for all on them were dead.

* * *

I could have come to land a long time before I did; but I would not: I was so afraid. For I was used to the silence of the ice; and I was used to the silence of the sea: but I was afraid of the silence of Europe.

* * *

Once, on the 14th of July, I had spied a whale, or had thought so, spouting remotely afar on the south horizon; and on the 19th I saw a swarm of porpoises vaulting the water in their successive way, northward: and, seeing them, I had said to myself: "Well, I am not alone in the world, then, my good God."

Moreover, some days later, the *Boreal* had found herself in a shoal of cod making away northward, millions of fish, for I saw them, and one afternoon caught three, hand-running, with the hook.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

THE VALLEY OF SILENT MEN

By E. Charles Vivian

It was a nightmare place of devilish beauty—and horror, brooded over by the slow-death poison of a plant that was seeded in hell! And into its silent menace one man must go, to save its self-willed prisoners from its fatal lure. . . .

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So the sea, at least, had its breeds to be my comrades.

But if the land should be found as still as the sea, without even the spouting whale, or bank of tumbling sea-hogs—if Paris were dumber than the everlasting snow—what then, I asked myself, should I do?

* * *

I could have made short work and landed at Shetland, for I found myself as far westward as longitude 11° 23′ W.; but I would not: I was so afraid. The shrinking within me to envisage that suspicion which I had turned me first in the direction of a foreign land.

So I made for Norway, and on the second night of this definite intention, about nine o'clock, the weather being squally, the sky lowering, the air sombrous, and the sea hard-looking, dark, ridged, I was steaming away at a good rate, holding the wheel, my poor port and starboard lights still beaming there, when, without the least notice, I received the roughest shock of my life, being shot bodily as from a cannon to the cabin door, through it headforemost down the companion-way, and still beyond along the passage, having crashed into some dark ship, probably of large size, though I never saw her, nor any sign of her; and all that night, and the next day till four in the afternoon, the *Boreal* went driving alone over the sea whither she would: for I lay dazed.

Then I found that I had received really insignificant injuries, considering; but I sat there an hour on the floor in a sulky, disgusted mood, and, when I got up, pettishly stopped the ship's engines, seeing my dozen dead all huddled and disfigured. Now I was afraid to steam by night, and even in the day-time would not go on for three days: for I was angry with I know not what, and disposed to quarrel with Those whom I could not see.

However, on the fourth day a rough swell which knocked the ship about, and made me uncomfortable, coaxed me into moving, as I did with my bows looking east and south.

I sighted the Norway coast five days later, in lat. 63° 19′, at noon of the 12th of August, and pricked off my course to follow it; but it was with a dawdling reluctance that I crawled, under half-speed. In some eight hours, as I was aware from the chart, I ought to sight the lighthouse-light on Smoelen Island; and when quiet night came, the black lake-water branded with trails of moonlight, I moved close by it, between ten and midnight, almost within the shadow of the mountains: but, Thou God, no shine was here; and all the way down I marked the rugged seaboard slumber darkling, afar or near, with never one friendly light.

* * *

Well, on the 15th of August I had another of those raptures whose passing away would have left an elephant prostrate. During four days I had noted not one sign of present life on the Norway coast, only cliffs, cliffs, dead and dark, and floating craft, all dead and dark; and my eyes now, I found, had acquired a crazy fixity of stare into the abyss of vacancy, while I remained unconscious of being, save of one point, rainbow-blue, far down in the infinite, which passed slowly from left to right before my consciousness a little way, then vanished, came back, and passed slowly afresh, from left to right continually, until some prick, or voice, would prod me into the consciousness that I was staring, whispering in confidence the warning: *"stare, and all's over with you!"* Well, lost in a trance of this sort, I was leaning over the wheel during the afternoon of the 15th, when it was if some instinct or premonition sprang up in me to say, "If you look yonder, you *will see. . . .!*", and in one instant I had ascended from all that depth of reverie to reality, had glanced to the right, and there, at last, my God, I saw something human that moved, at last—and it came to me.

That sense of recovery, of waking, of new solidity, of the comfortable usual, a millionfold too intense for utterance: anew now I can fancy and feel it—the rocky ordinary, on which to plant the feet, and live: for from the day when I had stood at the Pole, and viewed there the dizzy thing that had made me swoon, there had come into my way not one sign that other things like myself were alive with me, until now, suddenly, I had the proof: for on the south-western sea, not four knots away, I saw a ship, her bows, which were as sharp as a hatchet, briskly chipping through the smooth sea, throwing out profuse ribbons of foam that flowed wide-wavering out, with outward undulations, far behind her length, as she ran the waters in haste, straight northward.

At the moment I was steering about S. E. by S., fourteen knots out from a shadowy-

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blue series of Norway mountains, and, just giving the wheel one frantic spin to starboard to bring me down upon her, I dashed to the bridge, propped my back upon the mainmast, which passes through it, put a foot on the white iron rail in front of me, and there at once felt all the mocking devils of distracted revelry possess me, as I caught the cap from my hairs, and commenced to wave and wave and wave, maniac that I was: for at a second glance I saw that she was flying an ensign at the main, and a long pennant at the main-top, and I did not know what she was flying those flags there for: and I was embittered and driven mad.

Distinctly did she print herself upon my consciousness in that three minutes' interval, she a dull and cholera yellow, like lots of Russian ships, a space of faded pink visible at her bows under the yellow, her ensign the blue-and-white saltire, a passenger-liner, two-masted, two-funnelled, though from her funnels issued no smoke, her steam-cones in all positions, and all about her course the sea spotted with wobbling fulgors of the sun's going down, coarse blots of glory close to the eye, but graduating to a finer pattern in the distance, and at the horizon refined to a line of livid silver.

The double speed of her and of the *Boreal* must have been quite forty knots, and the meeting accomplished within five minutes: yet into that time I crowded years of life, shouting passionately at her insanity, my face and eyes inflamed with rage the most precipitate, uproarious: for she did not slow, nor signal, nor make any show of seeing me, but came furrowing down at me like Juggernaut with a steadfast run: so that I lost reason, thought, memory, sense of relation, in that seizure of hysteria that transported me; and can only remember now that, in the midst of my howling, a sentence howled by fiends who used my throat to express their frenzy set me laughing high and madly, for I was crying: "Hi! Bravo! Why don't you stop? *Madmen! I have been to the Pole!*"

In that moment an odour arose, and came, and struck upon my brain, most execrable; and while one might count ten I was aware of her engines sounding near, as that cursed charnel went churning the sea past me on her maenad way, hardly twenty yards from my nostrils. She was a thing, my God, from which the vulture would fly with loathing: I got a glimpse of decks piled thick with her festered dead.

Black on her yellow stern my eye-corner caught the word *Yaroslav*, as I bent over the rail to retch and cough and vomit at her: she was a horrid thing.

This ship had without doubt been pretty far south in tropical or sub-tropical latitudes with her throng of corpses: for all the bodies which I had seen until then, so far from smelling ill, seemed to breathe out a certain perfume of the peach; and she was one of those ships which have substituted liquid air for steam, yet retained their old steam-funnels, &c., in case of trouble, for air was still looked at askance by builders on account of the accidents sometimes due to it: so this *Yaroslav* must have been left with her engines working when her crew were overtaken by death, and, her air-tanks being still unemptied, must have been ranging the ocean with impunity ever since, during I knew not how many months, or years.

Well, I coasted Norway for almost a hundred and forty miles without once going closer than two or three miles: for something held me back; but, passing the fjord-mouth where I knew that Aadheim was, I suddenly spun the helm to port before I knew that I was doing it, and made for land.

In half an hour I was moving up an opening in the land with mountains on either hand, streaky rock at their summit, umbrageous boscage below; and the whole softened, as it were, by veils woven of the rainbow.

This stretch of water lies as winding as a thread which one drops, only the windings are more pointed, so that every few minutes the scene was a new scene, though the vessel just pushed her way up; and nothing of what was gone behind me could be spied, or merely a land-locked gleam like a pond.

I never saw water so polished, argent, like polished marble, reflecting everything boldly within the womb of its lucid abysm, over which hardly a whiff blew that sundown, wimpling about the bluff *Boreal*, which seemed to move as if shrinking from bruising it, in rich wrinkles and creases, like glycerine, or dewy-trickling lotus-oil: yet it was only the sea; and the grandeur yonder was only crag and autumn-foliage and mountain-slope: yet all seemed caught-up, rapt in a trance of rose and daffodil, compounded of the stuff of dreams and bubbles, of dust-of-flowers, and blushes of the peach.

I saw it not only with joy, but with astonishment, having forgotten, as was natural in all that long barrenness of snow

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and sea, that aught could be so ethereally beauteous, yet homely, too, human, familiar, and consoling; the air here richly imbued with that peachy odour; and there was a Sabbath and a nepenthe and a charm in that place just then, as it were of those gardens of Hesperus and fields of asphodel reserved for the spirits of the just.

Alas, but I had the glass, and for me nepenthe was mingled with a despair immense as the heavens, my good God: for anon I would take it up to search some perched hut of the peasant, or burg of the "bonder," on the tops: and I saw no one; and to the left, at the fourth bend of the fjord, where there is one of those watch-towers that these people used for watching in-coming fish, I saw on a slope of rock just before the tower a body which looked as if it must tumble headlong; and when I spied him there, I felt definitely, for the first time, that shoreless despair which I alone of men have felt, high as the stars, darksome as hell; and I fell to staring anew that stare of Nirvana and the lunacy of Nothingness, wherein Time merges in Eternity, and all being, like one drop of water, flies dispersed to fill the void of space, and is lost.

The *Boreal's* bow walking over a fishing-boat roused me, and a minute later I saw two people on the shore, which, three feet above the water there, is edged with boulders and shrubs, behind which is a path winding upward through a gorge; and on the path I saw a driver of one of those sulkies called karjolers, he on the high front seat lying sideward and backward, his head resting on the wheel; and on a trunk strapped to a frame on the axle behind was a boy, his head, too, resting sideward on the wheel, near the other's; and the pony pitched forward on its fore-knees.

* * *

After the voe's next foreland, I commenced to see craft, whose number increased as I advanced, small boats, with some schooners, sloops, the majority aground; and suddenly now I was conscious that, mingling with that delicious odour of spring-blossoms—profoundly modifying, yet not destroying it—was another odour, wafted to me on the wings of the whiffs from the land; and "man," I said, "is decomposing": for I knew it well: the odour of human corruption.

* * *

The fjord opened finally in a wider basin, surrounded by towering mountains that reflected themselves in the basin to their last cloudy crag: at the end of which were ships, and a quarry, and a homely old town.

Not a sound, not one; only my own engines sluggishly going: and here, it was clear, the Angel of Silence had passed, and his scythe mown.

I ran and stopped the engines, and, without anchoring, got down into a boat that lay at the ship's side, to paddle toward the little quay, passing under a brigantine with her courses set, three jibs, staysails, squaresails, gafftopsail, looking hanging and listless, and wedded to a copy of herself, mast-downward, with the water; there were three lumber-schooners, a forty-ton steam-boat, a tiny barque, five herring-fishers, and ten or twelve shallops: and the sailing-craft had all fore-and-aft sails set; and about each, as I rowed near, brooded an odour which was both sweet and odious, more suggestive of the genius of mortality—the essential mood and meaning of Azreal—than aught that I had ever dreamed: for all, as I saw, were thronged with bodies.

Well, I went up the old mossed steps in that dazed state in which one notices frivolous things: conscious of the lightness of my new clothes, for the day before I had changed to Summer things, having on now only a shirt of undyed wool, the sleeves rolled up, and cord trousers, with a belt, and a cloth cap over my long hair, and an old pair of yellow shoes, without laces, without socks; and from the edge of the quay I looked out over a piece of rough ground which lay between the town and the quay.

What I saw was not only woeful, but wildly startling: woeful, because a multitude had assembled, and lay dead, there; and wildly startling, because something in their *ensemble* informed me in one minute why they were there in such a great number.

They were there with the motive, and in the hope, to fly westward by boat.

And the something which informed me of this was a certain *foreign* air about that field of dead, as the eye rested on it: something unnorthern, southern, Oriental.

Two yards from my foot lay a Norway peasant-girl in a green gown, scarlet stomacher, Scotch bonnet, and an old Norway man in knee-breeches, "small-clothes," and worsted cap.

I went nearer to where they lay thick

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between the quay and a stone fountain in the middle of the space, and I saw among those northern dead two women in costly dress, Spanish or Italian, and the yellower mortality of a Mongol, probably a Magyar, and some twenty obvious French, and two Morocco fezzes, and the green turban of a shereef, and the white of an Ulema.

So I asked myself this question: "How came these foreign stragglers here in this northern townlet?"

And my wild heart answered: "There has been an impassioned stampede, northward and westward, of all the breeds of Man: and this that I here see is but the far-flung spray of that infuriate flood."

* * *

Well, I walked along a street, cautious where I trod, a street not all voiceless, but haunted by swarms of mosquitoes and dreamy twinges and messages of melody at the tympanum, like the drawing of the fiddle-stick in sorrow-land; a street strait, pavered, steep, drear; and the sensations with which I, poor bowed man, went moping about that town, only Atlas, fabled to bear the burden of this earth, may know.

* * *

I thought to myself: If now a swell from the Deep has swept over this planetary ship of earth, and I, who alone chanced to find myself in the furthest stern, am the sole survivor of her crew? . . . What then, my God, shall I do?

* * *

I felt, I felt, that in this place, save the water-gnats of Norway, stirred no living thing; that the hum and the savour of Eternity pervaded, smothered, mummified it.

The houses are mostly of wood, some large, with *porte-cochères* leading into semi-circular yards, round which the buildings stand, steep-roofed in view of the snow-masses of winter; and through one casement of one, near the ground, I saw a stout old woman in a cap on her face before a porcelain stove. But I paced on without stoppage through three streets, and came out, as it got dark, upon a piece of grass-land leading downward to a mountain-gorge, some distance along which gorge it was that I found myself sitting the next morning: and how, and in what trance, I passed all that blank night is obliterated from my mind.

When I looked about with the return of light I saw mountains of fir on either side, almost meeting overhead at some points, deeply shading the mossy gorge; and, getting up, careless of direction, I went still onward, to walk and walk for hours, unconscious of hunger, though there was profusion of wild mountain-strawberries, very tiny, which must bloom almost into winter, a few of which I ate; and there were blue gentianellas, and lilies-of-the-valley, and luxuriance of boscage, and always a noise of waters: I saw little cataracts aloft flackering like white wild rags, for they fractured in the mid-fall, and were caught away, and lost; I saw also patches of reaped hay and barley, hung up in a strange way on stakes, I suppose to dry; and perched huts; and a pigmy castle

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or burg, inaccessible seemingly; but none of these did I enter; and five bodies only I saw in the gorge, a woman with a child, and a man with two small cattle.

Near three in the afternoon, startled to see myself there, I started to go back; and it was dark when I again moved through those gloomy streets of Aadheim, making for the quay, feeling now my hunger and fatigue, without any intention of entering any house; but, as I stepped by one *porte-cochère,* something shoved me in, for my intellect had become as fluff on the winds, not working of its own verve, but the sport of impulses that seemed external: so, after passing across the yard, I ascended a spiral stair of wood by a twilight which just enabled me to pick my way among five or six dim forms fallen there: and in that confined place fantastic qualms beset me. I mounted to the first landing, tried the door, it was locked; mounted to the second: that door was open; and with reluctance, chilly, I took a step inward where all was pitch darkness, the window-stores drawn.

I hesitated: it was pretty dark; tried to utter that word of mine, but it came up barely in a whisper, tried still once, and heard myself say: "Anyone?"; but in venturing yet a step forward, I had trodden upon soft guts, and at that contact terrors got me: for it was as though I beheld the goblin eye-balls of Hell and frenzy goggle upon me out of that gloom; and, murmuring a gurgle of remonstrance, I was gone, helter-skelter down the stairs, treading upon dead, across the yard, down the street, with pelting feet, and open arms, and sobbing bosom, for I thought that all Aadheim was after me; nor was my horrid haste abated till I was on board the *Boreal,* and was moving down the fjord.

Out to sea, then, I went anew; and within the next few days visited Bergen, and put in at Stavanger: and Bergen and Stavanger were dead.

It was then, on the 20th of August, that I bent my bow toward my native land.

* * *

From Stavanger I steered a straight course for the Humber.

I had no sooner left behind me the Scandinavian coast than I commenced to come among the ships—ship after ship; and by the time I entered the zone of the usual alteration of sunny day and sunless night, I was moving through the medley of an incredible number of craft, a far-cast armada: for over all that expanse of the North Sea, where in its most populous days of trade, the sailor might perhaps spy a sail or two, I had now at every moment twelve within scope of the glass, oftentimes forty.

And still they lay on a still sea, itself a dead thing, livid as the lips of death, there being a starkness of trance in the calm which was most remarkable: for the ocean seemed weighted, and the air drugged.

Extremely slow was my progress, for at first I would not leave any ship, however remotely pigmy, without approaching sufficiently to investigate her, at least with the glass: and a multitudinous mixture of species they were, trawlers in hosts, warships of every nation, used, it seemed as passenger-boats, smacks, feluccas, liners, steam-barges, great four-masters with sails, Channel boats, luggers, a Venetian *burchio,* colliers, yachts, *remorqueurs,* training ships, dredgers, two dahabeeahs with curving gaffs, Marseilles fishers, a Maltese *speronare,* American off-shore sail, Mississippi steam-boats, Sorrento lug-schooners, Rhine punts, yawls, old frigates and three-deckers, called to novel use, Stromboli caiques, Yarmouth tubs, xebecs, Rotterdam flat-bottoms, floats, mere gunwaled rafts—anything from anywhere that could bear a human freight on water had come, and was there: and all, I knew, had been making westward, or northward, or both; and all, I knew, were thronged; and all were tombs, listlessly wandering, my God, on the wandering sea with their throngs.

And so fair the world round them: suavest autumn weather; all the atmosphere aromatic with the vernal cheeriness of that perfume of peach: yet not so utterly calm, but, if I passed close to the lee of any floating thing, the spicy breathings of morning or evening brought me vague puffs of the odour of the mortal over-ripe for the grave.

So burdensome and accursed did this thing become to me, such a plague and a hissing, vague as was the offence, that I began to shun rather than to seek the ships, and also I now dropped my twelve, whom I had kept to be my companions all the way from the Far North, one by one, into the sea: for now I had definitely passed into a zone of warmth.

I was convinced, however, that the poison, whatever it might be, had some embalming, or antiseptic, effect upon the bodies: at Aadheim, Bergen, and Stavanger, for instance, where the temperature permitted me to go without a jacket, only

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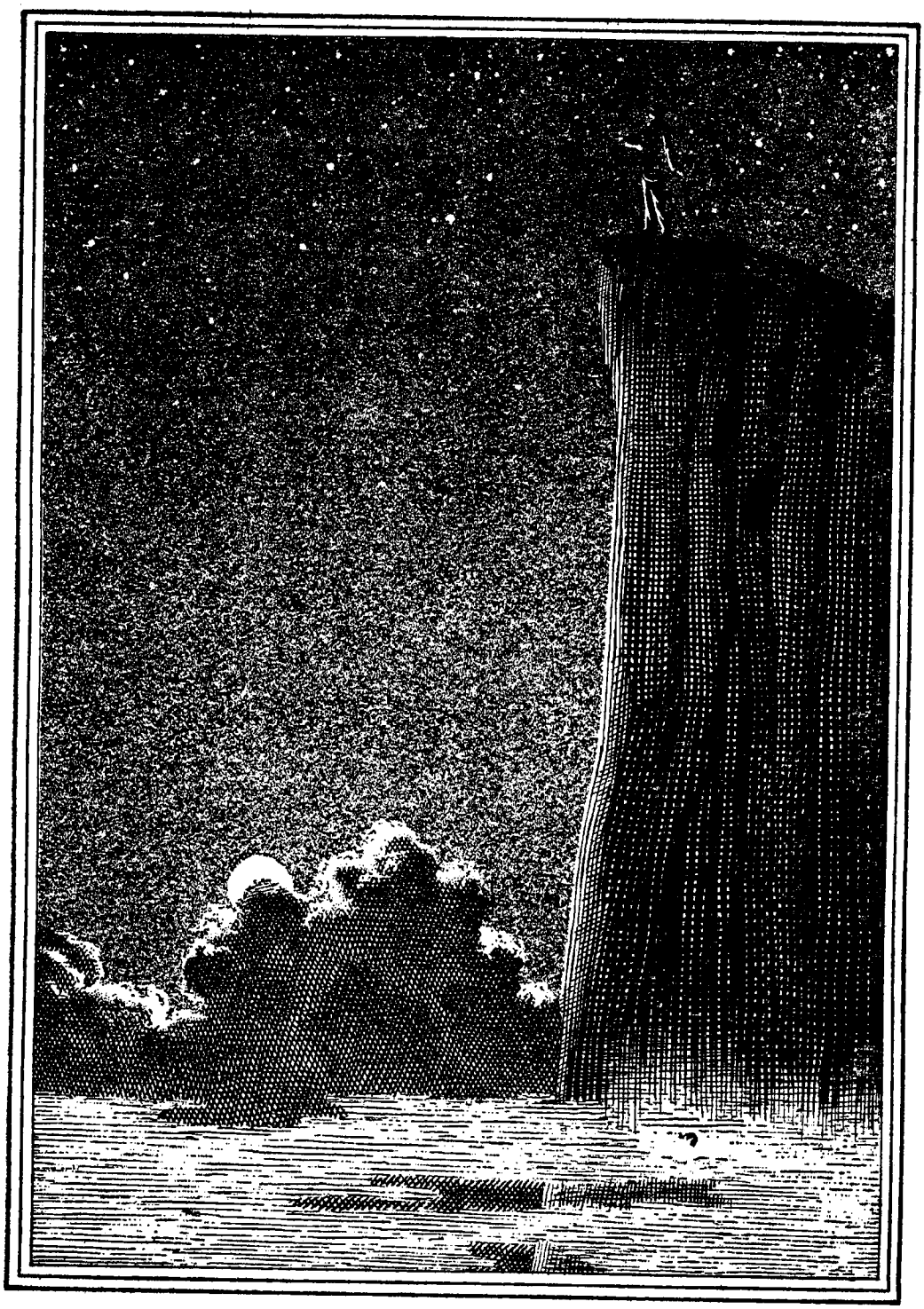

"Alone! Alone!"

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hints and whiffs of the processes of dissolution had troubled me.

* * *

Very benign, I say, and joyous to see, was sky and sea during all that voyage; but it was at sunset that my sense of the wondrously beautiful was roused and excited, in spite of that burden which I bore: for, certainly, I never saw sunsets resembling those, nor could ever have dreamt of aught so flamboyant, exorbitant and distraught, all the vaults seeming transformed to an arena for warring powers warring for the cosmos, or it was like the wild countenance of God routed, and flying flustered through cosmic storm-gulfs from His foes. But many evenings I watched it with unintelligent awe, believing it but a portent of the unsheathed sword of the Almighty, until one morning a thought pricked me like a pin, for I suddenly remembered the wild sunsets of the nineteenth century witnessed in Europe, America, and, I think, everywhere, after the eruption of the volcano of Krakatoa.

And whereas I had previously said to myself "If now a wave from the Deep has washed over this wandering Ship-of-Space . . . " I said now "A wave—but hardly from the Deep: a wave rather which she had husbanded, and has spotted, from her own unmotherly bowels. . . ."

* * *

I had some knowledge of the Morse code, of the manipulation of tape-machines, telegraphic typing-machines, wireless transmitting, as of most little things of that sort which came within the outskirts of the interest of a man of science; I had collaborated with Professor Stanistreet in the production of a text-book called *Applications of Science to the Arts*, which had brought us some money: and, on the whole, the *minutiae* of modern things were still pretty fresh in my memory: so I could have wirelessed, or tried to wire from Bergen, to somewhere; but I would not: I was so afraid; afraid lest for ever from nowhere should occur one replying click, or stir of dial-needle.

* * *

I could have made short work and landed at Hull; but I would not: I was so afraid. For I was used to the silence of the ice; and I was used to the silence of the sea: but I was afraid of the silence of England.

* * *

I came in sight of the coast on the morning of the 26th of August, somewhere about Hornsea, but did not see any town, for I put the helm to port, and went on further south, no longer bothering with the instruments, but coasting at haphazard, now in sight of land, now in the centre of a circle of sea, not admitting to myself the motive of this loitering slowness, nor thinking at all, but ignoring the lurking dread of the morrow which I shirked, and furtively dwelling in to-day; so I passed the Wash, passed Yarmouth, Felixtowe, the things that floated motionless on the sea being now beyond counting, for I could scarcely lower my lids ten minutes and lift them without seeing yet another there: so that soon after dusk I, too, had to stand still among them all, until morning, for they lay dark, and to cruise about would have been to drown the already dead.

Well, I came to the Thames-mouth, and lay pretty well in among the Flats and Pan Sands toward nine one evening, not seven miles from Sheppey and the North Kent coast: and I did not see any Nore Light, nor Girdler Light; and all along the coast I had seen no light, though as to that I breathed not a syllable to myself, not admitting it, nor letting my heart surmise; but with a mock-mistrustful underlook, half daft, I would regard the darkling land, considering it a sentient thing that would be playing a prank upon me.

And the next morning, when I idled further on, my furtive eye-corners were very well aware of the Prince's Channel lightship, also of the Tongue ship, for there they were; but I would not look at them at all, nor steer near them, for I did not want to have anything to do with whatever might have happened beyond my own ken, and it was better to look straight before, observing nothing, and concerning one's-self with one's-self.

The next evening, after having gone out to sea again, I was again in, a little to the E. by S. of the North Foreland, and I saw no light there, nor any Sandhead light, but over the sea vast signs of wreckage, and the coasts were strewn with old wrecked fleets: then I moved away about S. E., very slowly steaming—for anywhere hereabouts hundreds upon hundreds of hulls lay dead within a ten-mile circum-

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ference of sea—and by two in the 'foreday had roamed up well within sight of the French cliffs; for I had said "I will go and see the light-beam of that revolving-drum on Calais pier, that nightly beams halfway over-sea to England"; and the moon shone clear in the southern sky that morning, like an old dying queen whose Court swarms distantly from round her, diffident, pale, tremulous, the paler the nearer; and I watched the mountain-shadows about her spotty full-face, and her nimbus of mist, and her beams on the sea, as it were kisses sneaked in the kingdom of sleep, and among the quiet ships white trails and powderings of light, strange, agitated, like palace-corridors in some fairyland forlorn, thronged with wan whispers, scandals, and runnings-to-and-fro, with leers, and breathless last embraces, and flight of the princess, and death-bed of the king; and on the N. E. horizon a streak of cloud that seemed outside the sky; and yonder, not far, the chalk coast-cliffs, not so low as at Calais near, but arranged in masses with vales of sward between, each with its wreck: but no beam of any revolving-drum I saw.

* * *

I could not sleep that night: for all the operations of my mind and body seemed in abeyance: so, mechanically, I moved the ship westward once more, until the sun came up, when, scarcely two miles from me, there stood the cliffs of Dover, and over the crenulated summit of the Castle I noted the Union Jack hanging motionless.

I heard eight, nine, o'clock strike in the cabin, and I was still at sea; but some audacious whisper was at my brain: and at 10:30, the 2nd of September, just opposite the Cross Wall Custom House, the *Boreal's* anchor-chain, after a voyage of three years, two months, and fourteen days, ran thundering, thundering, through the starboard hawsehole.

Ah, Heaven! but I must have been mad to let the anchor go! for the effect upon me of that obstreperous hubbub, breaking out sudden upon all that cemetery repose that blessed morning, and bellowing, it seemed, a year, was appalling; and at the cruel racket I stood excruciated, shivering with a flinching heart, God knows: for not less uproarious than the rumpus of the Judgment trump it raged and raged, and I thought that all the armies of the dead could hardly fail to start and rise at alarum so excessive, and question me with their eyes. . . .

* * *

On the top of the Cross Wall I saw a crab crawling; at its end, where a street begins, I saw a gas-light, and at its foot a man on his face, clad only in a shirt and one boot; I saw the harbour packed with all sorts of craft, and on a Calais-Dover boat nine yards from me I saw the dead piled, she being unmoored, and continually grinding against a green brig.

And when I saw that, I dropped down there by the capstan, and my heart sobbed, as I said "Well, Lord God, Thou hast destroyed the work of Thy hand. . . ."

* * *

After a time I got up, went below in a state of somnambulism, took a packet of pemmican cakes, leapt to land, and went following the railway that runs from the Admiralty Pier to a passage with railway-masonry on one side, in which I saw five dead, and could not believe that I was in England, for all were dark-skinned people,

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three gaudily dressed, two in flowing robes; and the same when I walked into a street leading northward, for there were a hundred, and never saw I, except in Constantinople, where I once lived eighteen months, so variegated a mixture of races, black, brunette, brown, yellow, white, some emaciated like people dead from famine; and, over-looking them all, one boy in an Eton collar seated on a bicycle, supported by a lamp-post which his arms clasped, he proving the extraordinary suddenness of the death which had overtaken them all.

I did not know whither, nor why, I went, nor had I any notion whether all this was palpably beheld by me in the planet which I had known, or in some other, or was all phantasy of my disembodied anima, for I had the thought that I also might be dead since old ages, my soul roaming now through the profoundness of space, in which there is neither north nor south, nor up nor down, nor measure nor relation, nor aught whatever, save an uneasy consciousness of a dream about bottomlessness. Of sorrow or pain, I think, I felt nothing, though I have a sort of memory now that some sound resembling a sob or groan, though it was neither, proceeded at regular intervals from my bosom during three or four days.

Meantime, my brain registered like a tape-machine details the most frivolous—the name of a street, Strond Street, Snargate Street; the fur cap—black fur for the side, ermine for the top—of a portly Karaite priest on his back, his robes blown up to his knees, and neatly folded there; a violin-bow gripped between the irregular teeth of a little Spaniard, his hair brushed back, mad-looking eyes; odd shoes on the feet of a French girl, one black, one brown: there lying as numerous as gunners who fall round their carriage, five to ten feet apart, the majority, as also in Norway and on the crafts, in postures of distraction, with far-spread arms, frantic distortion of limb, like men who in the instant before death called upon the rocks and hills to cover them.

* * *

I came to an opening in the land, named, I think, "The Shaft," into which I passed, climbing a great number of steps, which I began to count, but left off, then the dead, and left off; and finally, at the summit, which must be even higher than the Castle, came to a great space laid out with gravel-walks, and saw fortifications, barracks, a citadel. I was surprised at the breadth of view. Between me and the Castle to the east lay the crowd of houses, brick and rag-stone, mixed in the distance with a vagueness of azure haze; and to the right the harbour, the sea, the ships; and about me on the heights nine or ten dead, biting the dust; the sun now high, warm, with hardly a cloud in all the vastness of the vault; and yonder a cloud that was the Norman coast. It seemed too big for one poor man.

My head nodded, I sitting on a bench of boards, with intervals; and, as I saw it all, I nodded, my forehead propped on my left hand, there was in my head an old street-song that I groaned sleepily, like coronachs and dread funereal nenias, the packet of pemmican-cakes beating time in my right hand, rising and dropping, dropping heavily and rising, in time. . . .

I'll buy the ring,
You'll rear the kids:
There'll be servants to wait
on our ting, ting, ting.

Ting, ting,
Won't we be happy?
Ting, ting,
That shall be it;
I'll buy the ring,
You'll rear the kids:
There'll be servants to wait
on our ting, ting, ting.

So, maundering, I dropped forward upon my face; and for twenty-three hours, the living undistinguished from the dead, I slept there.

* * *

I was awaked by a drizzle, leapt up, and, on looking at my silver chronometer, which, attached by a leather to my belt, I carried in my trousers' pocket, saw that it was 9 a.m., the sky now sombrous; and a moaning wind—almost a new thing now to me—had risen.

I ate some pemmican, for I had a reluctance—needless, as it proved—to eat any of the thousand luxuries here, sufficient no doubt, in a town like Dover alone, to last me hundreds of years; and, having eaten, I descended "The Shaft," to spend the whole day, though it rained and blustered, in strolling about. Reasoning in my numb way from the number of ships on the sea, I believed that the town would be found to be over-crowded with dead, but this was not so, for that westward furore

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and stampede must have operated here also, leaving the town empty but for the new-coming hosts.

My first work was to go into a grocer's shop, which was a post-and-telegraph office, with the notion, I suppose, to get a message through to somewhere, in this shop a single gas-jet glimmering at last, this and that other near the pier being the only two which I saw; and garishly enough they glared there, transparently wannish, as it were shamed, like blinking night-things surprised by the brilliance of day, they having so flared and stared for months, or years, inasmuch as they were now blazing diminished, with streaks and rays in the flame, as if by effort: so, if these were the only two, months must have been needed almost to exhaust the gasometer; and this gas-jet blinked upon a man with a number of parcels scattered about him, and on the counter an empty till, and behind it a little woman, her face resting sideways in the till, her fingers clutching the outer counter-rim, with such an expression of terror!

So I got over the counter to table behind a wire-gauze, and went over the Morse alphabet in my mind before touching the Wheatstone drop-handle, never asking myself who was to answer my message, habit being still strong upon me, and my mind dodged from reasoning from what I saw to what I did not see; but when I moved the commutator, and peered at the dial-needle at my right, as it did not move, I knew that no current was passing, for one pair of the commutator-spikes had apparently been in contact with a pair of the uprights, so the battery had run down: and with a kind of fright, I was up, leapt, and got away from the place, though there was a number of telegrams about, which, if I had been in my senses, I would have read.

At the next street-corner I saw open the door of a large house, and went in: but from bottom to top no one there, except one English girl, seated in an easy-chair in a drawing-room furnished with Valenciennes curtains and azure-satin, a girl of the "submerged" class clad in rags, and there she lay back with a hanging jaw in an awkward sort of posture, a jemmy at her feet, she clutching a lot of bank-notes, in her lap two watches: in fact the bodies here were either those of foreigners, or else of the very poor, the very old, or the very young.

But what made me remember that house was that I found there on a sofa a paper, *The Kent Express;* and, sitting unconscious of my neighbour, I pored long over what was written there.

It said in an article that I tore out and kept: "Communication with Tilsit, Insterburg, Warsaw, Cracow, Przemysl, Gross Wardein, Karlsburg, and many smaller towns immediately east of the 21st of longitude has ceased during the night, though in some at least of them there must have been operators still at their posts, undrawn into the westward-rolling torrent: but as all messages from Western Europe have been met only by that mysterious muteness which, three months and two days since, astounded civilisation in the case of Eastern New Zealand, we can only assume that these towns, too, have been added to the mournful catalogue; indeed, after last evening's Paris news we might have foretold with some assurance, not merely their overthrow, but even the moment of it; for the rate of the slow-riding vapour which is touring our globe is no longer doubtful, having now been definitely fixed by Professor Craven at 100½ miles a day—4 miles 330 yards an hour.

"Its nature, its origin, remain matters of conjecture: for it seems to leave no living thing behind it; nor, God knows, is that of any moment now to us who remain. The rumour that it is associated with an odour of almonds is asserted on good authority to be improbable, but the morose purple of its impending gloom has been attested by tardy fugitives from the face of its rolling and smoky march.

"Is this the end? We do not, will not, believe it. Will the sweet sky which to-day smiles over us be invaded in nine days, or less, by this smoke of Night? In spite of the avowals of the scientists, we still doubt. For, if so, to what purpose that drama of Evolution in which we seem to see the artistry of the Dramaturgist? Surely, the end of a fifth act should be obvious, satisfying to one's sense of the complete: but History so far, hoary as it has been, resembles rather a prologue than a fifth act. Can it be that the Manager, utterly dissatisfied, would sweep all off, and 'hang up' the piece for ever?

"Certainly, the sin of mankind has been as scarlet: and if this Heavenly earth that he has converted into Hell smother him now under the muck of Hell, little the wonder. But we will not yet believe. There is a sparing strain in Nature; through the world, as a thread, is spun a silence which smiles; and on the end of events we find placarded large the words: 'Why were ye afraid?' A tranquil hope, then—even now

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when we crouch beneath this world-wide shadow of the wings of the bird of death—befits us: and, indeed, we see such an attitude among some of the humblest of our people, from whose heart arises the sigh, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' Hear, therefore, O Lord; O Lord, look down, and save.

"But even as we thus speak of hope, reason, if we would hear her, whispers us 'dreamer': and inclement is the sky of earth. No more craft can New York harbour hold, and whereas, among us, men perish of privations by the hundred thousand, yonder across the sea they perish by the million: for where the rich are pinched, how can the indigent live? Already 850 out of the 1500 millions of our race have perished; and the empires of civilisation, have crumbled like sand-castles to an encumbrance of anarchies.

"Thousands of unburied dead, anticipating the more deliberate doom that comes and smokes, and rides and comes and comes, and does not tire, strew the streets of London, Manchester; the guides of the nation have fled; the husband stabs his wife for a slice of bread; the fields lie waste; crowds carouse in our churches, universities, palaces, banks, hospitals; we understand that late last night three territorial regiments, the Munster Fusilliers, and the Lothian and East Lancashire Regiments, riotously disbanded themselves, shooting two officers; disease, as we know, is come into its kingdom; in several towns the police seem to have disappeared, and, in nearly all, every vestige of decency; the results following upon the release of the convicts appear to be monstrous in the respective districts; and within three months Hell seems to have acquired this planet, sending forth Horror, like a wolf, and Despair, like a disastrous sky, to devour and confound her. Hear, therefore, O Lord, and forgive our iniquity; O Lord, we beseech Thee; look down, O Lord, and spare."

* * *

When I had read this, and the rest of the paper, which had one sheet-side blank, I sat an hour there, eyeing a patch of the purple ash on the floor close to where the girl sat with her timepieces in her eternity; and there was a not a feeling in me, except a pricking of curiosity, which later became morbid, to know more about that cloud of smoke of which this paper spoke, of its dates, its source, its nature; then I went down, and entered several houses, seeking for more papers, but did not see any; then found a paper-shop which was open, with notice-boards outside, but either it had been abandoned, or printing must have stopped near the date of the paper that I had read, for the three papers there were dated long previously, and I did not read them.

Now it was raining, and a blustering autumn day it was, distributing all the odours, continually bringing me mixed whiffs of blossoms and the stench of decay; but I would not mind it much, wandered and wandered, till I was tired of spahi and bashi-bazouk, of Greek and Catalan, of Russian "pope" and Coptic abuna, of dragoman and Calmuck, of Egyptian maulawi and Afghan mullah, Neapolitan and sheik, and the nightmare of wild poses, colours, stuffs and garbs, yellow-green kefies of the Bedouin, shawl-turbans of Baghdad, the red tarboosh, the voluminous rose-silk tob of women, and face-veils, the labourer's corduroy, and stark distorted nakedness, and sashes of figured muslin. About four I found myself seated for very weariness on a doorstep, bent beneath the rain, but soon was up anew, fascinated may-be by this changing bazaar of sameness, its chance combinations and permutations, its novelty in monotony, and about five was at a station marked Harbour Station, in and about which lay a crowd, but no train. There I sat again and rested, rose and roamed again, until after six I found myself at another station named "Priory"; and here I saw two long trains, both bethronged, one on a siding, and one at the up-platform.

On examining both engines, I found them of the old steam-type, in one no water, but in that at the platform the gauge showed some; and, on overhauling all the machinery, I found it good, though rusted, with plenty of fuel, of oil, which I supplemented from a shop near; and for ninety minutes my mind and hands acted with an intelligence as it were automatic, till I saw the fire blazing finely, the steam-gauge registering; and when the safety-valve lever, whose load I lightened by two atmospheres, lifted, I jumped down to try to disconnect the string of carriages from the engine, but failed in this, the coupling being some automatism new to me; nor did I care. As it was now dark, and still some oil for bull's-eye and lantern, I lit them; then rolled driver and stoker, one to the platform, one upon the rails; and about 8:30 ran out from Dover, my throttle-valve pealing high a long falsetto through the bleak and desolate night.

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My aim was London; but I knew nothing of the metals, their junctions, facing-points, sidings, shuntings, and complexities, nor was even sure whether I was raging toward, or away from, London; but just in proportion as my timorousness of the engine hardened into familiarity and self-confidence, I quickened speed, wilfully, with an obstinacy deaf and obdurate, till finally, from a crawl, I was flying at a shocking velocity, while something, tongue in cheek, seemed to whisper me "there must be trains blocking the rails, at stations, in sheds, everywhere—it is a maniac's ride, a ride of death, Flying Dutchman's frenzy; remember your dark brigade of passengers who rock and bump together, and will suffer in a shock"; but stubbornly I thought "they wished to go to London": and on I raged, not crazily exhilarated, I think, but feeling a wicked and morose unreason glow dully in my bosom, while I stoked begrimed at the firebox, or caught sight of the corpse of horse or ox, of trees and fields receding, glooming homestead and farm, flowing ghostly past me.

Long, though, it did not last: I could not have been twenty miles from Dover when, on a straight stretch of line, I made out before me a tarpaulined mass opposite a signal box: and instantly callousness popped into panic in me. But even as I put on the brake, dragged at the link-gear lever, I understood that it was too late—rushed toward the gangway for a wild jump down an embankment to the right, but was flung forward by a series of rough bumps, caused by some ten oxen that lay there across the rails; and when I picked myself up and leapt, some seconds before the collision, the speed must have slackened, for I received no fracture, but lay in semi-coma in a patch of yellow-flowering whin on level ground, just conscious of a conflagration on the rails forty yards away, and, all the dark hours, of vague thunder sounding from somewhere.

* * *

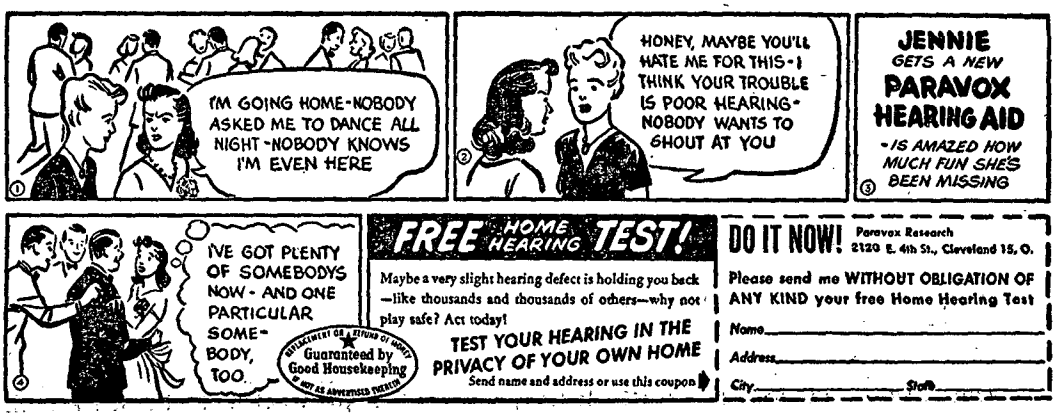
By five in the morning I was sitting up, rubbing my eyes, seeing in a dim light mixed with drizzle that the train of my last night's debauch was a huddled-up chaos of carriages and bodies, while on my right a cave-barred gate swung with groans; and four yards from me a wee pony with a swollen wan belly, the picture of death; and dead wet birds.

I picked myself up, to go through the gate up a row of elms to a house which I found to be a tavern with a barn, forming one house, the barn much larger than the tavern part; and I went into the tavern by a side-door—behind the bar—into a parlour—up a little stair—into two rooms, but no one there; then round into the barn, paved with cobblestones, and there lay a mare and foal, some fowls, two cows; then up a ladder-stair to a trap-door, and on the floor above in the middle of a wilderness of hay saw nine labourers, five men and four women, huddled together, with some spirit in a tin-pail, so that these had died riotous.

Amid them I slept three hours, afterwards went back to the tavern, and had some biscuits, of which I opened a new tin, with some ham, jam and apples, of which I made a good meal, for my pemmican was gone.

Afterwards I went following the rail-track on foot, the engines of both the trains in collision being smashed, knowing north from south by the sun; and, after many stoppages at houses, arrived, about eleven in the night, at a populous town.

By the Dane John and the Cathedral I recognised it as Canterbury, which I knew well, and walked up to the High Street con-


I'M GOING HOME-NOBODY ASKED ME TO DANCE ALL NIGHT-NOBODY KNOWS I'M EVEN HERE
HONEY, MAYBE YOU'LL HATE ME FOR THIS-I THINK YOUR TROUBLE IS POOR HEARING-NOBODY WANTS TO SHOUT AT YOU
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scious for the first time of that regularly-repeated sound, like a sob or groan, which was proceeding from my throat. As there was no visible moon, and these old streets pretty dim, I had to pick my way, lest I should desecrate the dead with my foot, and they all should rise with hue-and-cry to hunt me. However, the bodies here were not numerous, most, as before, being foreigners: and these, scattered about this prim old city in that mourning darkness, presented such a spectacle of the baleful wrath of God, as broke me quite down at one place, where I stood constrained to jeremiads and sore sobbings, crying out upon it all, God knows.

"Not numerous"—till I stood at the west entrance of the Cathedral, whence I could descry spreading up the darkling nave, to the lantern, to the choir, a phantasmagorical mass of forms; and, going a little inward, flashing three matches, peering nearer, I seemed to see the transepts, too, crowded, the south-west porch thronged, so that a great congregation must have flocked hither shortly before their doom overtook them.

Here it was that I became convinced that the after-odour of the poison was not simply lingering in the air, but was being more or less given off by the bodies: for the blossomy odour of this church positively submerged that odour, the whole rather breathing the aroma of old mouldy linens embalmed for years in cedars.

Well, with a stealthy trot I was off from the abysmal stillness of that place, but in Palace Street near made one of those immoderate rackets which seemed to outrage the creation and left me faint, breathless —the racket of the train being different, for there I was fleeing, but here a captive, and which way I fled was capture: for, passing along Palace Street, I saw a lamp-shop, and, wanting a lantern, attempted to get in; but the door was fastened, so, after going away, and kicking against a policeman's staff, I went again to fracture the window-glass—knew that it would make a row, and for ten minutes stood hesitating; but never could I have expected *such* a row, so passionate, dominant, divulgent, and, O Heaven, so long-lasting: for I seemed to have struck upon the weak spot of some planet which came tumbling, with protracted racket and débâcle, about my brows. It was an hour before I would climb in, but then found what I wanted, and some oil-cans; and until two in the morning the innovating flicker of my lantern went peering about at random.

Under an arch that spanned an alley I saw the window of a little house of rubble, and between its sashes rag beaten in to make the place air-tight against the poison; but when I went in I found the door of that room open, though it, too, had been stuffed at the edges, and on the threshold an old man and woman lay low: so I conjectured that, thus protected, they had remained shut in, till hunger, or the lack of oxygen, drove them forth, whereupon the poison, still active, must have ended them; and I was to see later that this expedient of making airtight had been widely resorted to, though the supply both of inclosed air and food had nowhere proved commensurate with the duration of the poisonous state.

Weary as I became, some morbid persistence sustained me, and I would not rest, so that four in the morning found me at a station afresh, industriously stooping, poor wretch, at the sotty task of getting another engine ready for travel: for nowhere hereabout did I see any motor-cars, all having fled westward; and this time when steam was up I succeeded in uncoupling the carriages from the engine: so by the time daylight glimmered I was gliding light away over the country, whither I did not know, but thinking now and again of London.

* * *

Now I went with more wariness, and got on very well, travelling seven days, seldom at night, never at more than twenty miles, slowing in tunnels. I do not know into what maze the train took me, for soon after leaving Canterbury it must have shunted down some branch-line, nor did the names of stations help, for their situation relatively to London I seldom knew; and again and again was my progress interrupted by trains on my metals, when I would have to run back to some shunting or siding; in two instances, these being remotely behind, I transhipped from my own to the impeding engine.

On the first day I travelled unimpeded till noon, when I drew up in open country that seemed uninhabitated for ages, only that half a mile off on a shaded sward was a house of artistic design, coated with tinted harling, the roof of red Ruabon tiles, with timbered gables, and I walked to it after another to-do with putting out the fire and laying a new one, the day lightsome and mild, with counties of white cloud lying quiet over the sky.

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I found in the house an outer and inner hall, oil-paintings, a kind of museum, in a bedroom three women with servants'-caps and footman arranged in a strange symmetrical way, head to head, like rays; and, as I stood looking at them, I could have sworn, my good God, that someone was coming up the stair—some creaking of the breeze in the house, increased a hundred-fold to my fevered hearing: for used to this muteness of eternity that I have heard for years now, it is as though I heard sounds through an ear-trumpet. So I went down quick, and, after eating, and drinking some clary-water, made of brandy, sugar, and rose-water, which I found in plenty, I lay down on a sofa in the outer hall, and slept there until midnight.

I went out then, still possessed with the greed to reach London: and, after getting the engine to rights, went off beneath sparkling black sky swarming with spawn of stars far-cast, some of them, I thought, not unlike this of mine, whelmed in immensity of silence, with one life perhaps to see it, and hear its silence; and all the night I travelled, stopping twice only, once to get the coal from an engine which had blocked me, and once to drink some water, which I took care, as always, should be running water. When I felt my head nod about 4 a.m., I tossed myself, just outside the arch of a tunnel, upon a bank thick with stalks and flowers, the workings of early dawn being then in the east: and there, till near eleven, slept.

On waking, I noticed that the country now looked more like Surrey than Kent—that regular swelling of the land; but in fact, though it must have been either, it looked like neither, for already everything had an aspect of tending to a state of wild nature, and I could well divine that for a year at the least no hand had tended the land—close before me being a few roods of lucerne of such superlative luxuriance, that I was led during that day and the next to scrutinise the state of vegetation with some minuteness, and everywhere detected a certain tendency to hypertrophy in stamens, calycles, pericarps, pistils, in every sort of bulbiferous thing that I looked at, in the rushes, above all, the fronds, mosses, lichens, and all cryptogamia, and in the trefoils, clover especially, and some creepers.

Many crop-fields, it was clear, had been prepared, but not sown, some not reaped, and in both cases I was struck with their aspects of rankness, as also in Norway, and was all the more astonished that this should happen in the months when a poison whose action is the arrest of oxidation had traversed the earth; I could only conclude that its presence in voluminous masses in the lower strata of the atmosphere had been more or less temporary, and that this tendency to exuberance that I noticed must be due to some principle by which Nature acts with freer energy and larger scope in the absence of man.

Two yards from the rails I saw when I stood up a rill at the foot of a rotten bit of fence, barely oozing itself onward under masses of stagnant fungoids; and here there was a sudden splash, and life, I catching sight of the hind legs diving of a frog; so, going to lie on my belly to pore over the wobbling little water, I presently saw three bleaks or ablets go gliding tiny, low down among the moss-hair flying wild from the bottom-rocks, and I thought how gladly would I become one of them, with my home so thatched and shadowy, and my life drenched in their wide-eyed reverie. At all events, these little beings are living, the batrachians also, and, as I found the next day, chrysalides of one sort or another, for, to my profound emotion, I saw a little butterfly staggering in the air over the flower-garden of a rustic station named Butley.

* * *

It was while I was lying there, poring upon that brooklet, that a thought arose in me: for I said: "If now I be here alone, alone, alone . . . alone, alone . . . one on the earth . . . and my girth have a span of 25,000 miles . . . what will happen to my mind? Into what kind of creature shall I writhe and change? I may live two years so! What will have happened then? I may live five years—ten! What will have happened after the five? the ten? I may live twenty, fifty . . ."

Already, already, there are things that peep and spring within me . . . !

* * *

Wanting food and fresh running water, I walked from the engine through fields of clover whose luxuriance concealed the footpaths, and reached my shoulders; and, after turning the shoulder of a hill, came to a park, in passing through which I saw some deer and three persons, then emerged upon a lawn with terraces, beyond which stood an Early English house—brick with

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copings and stringcourses of limestone, and spandrels of carved marble: before the porch being a table, or a series of tables, in the open air, still spread with cloths that resembled cerements after months of burial, the table having foods on it and some lamps, and all round it, and on the lawn, rustics. I seemed to know the house, no doubt from some print, but could not make out the escutcheon, though I could see from its simplicity that it must be ancient; and over it across the façade spread still some of the letters in evergreens of "Many happy returns of the day": so that someone must have "come of age," or something, for here all was joyance, and it was clear that these people had defied a doom which they foreknew.

I went almost through the spacious place of halls, marbles, famous oils, antlers, arras, placid bed-chambers, and it took me an hour. In one of a vista of three reception-rooms lay what must have been a number of quadrille-sets, for to the *coup d'oiel* they presented a two-and-two look, made very repulsive by their jewels: and I had to steel my heart to go through this house, for I did not know if these people were looking at me as soon as my back was turned.

Once I was on the point of flying, for, as I was stepping up the central stairway, there came a pelt of dead leaves against a window-pane in the corridor above, which thrilled me to my soul; but I thought that, if I once fled, they would all be at me from the rear, and I should be gibbering shrill ere I reached the outer hall, so stood my ground, even challengingly advancing; and in a small dim bedroom in the north wing saw a tall lady, with a groom, or woodman, riveted in an embrace on a settee, she with a coronet on her forehead, their lipless teeth still pressed together. Then I collected in a bag some delicacies from the under-regions, salami, mortadel, apples, roes, raisins, biscuits, some wines, bottled fruit, coffee, and so on, with tin-opener, fork, etc., and dragged them all the way back to the engine before I could eat.

* * *

My brain was in such a way, that it was days ere the obvious means of making my way to London, since I wanted to go there, got into my head, so that the engine went wandering the intricate railway-system of the south-country, I having twice to water her with a coal-bucket from ponds: for the injector was giving no water from the tank, and I did not know where to look for tank-sheds. On the fifth evening, instead of into London, I ran into Guildford.

* * *

That night from eleven till the next day, a great gale reigned over England: let me note it down; and ten days later, on the 17th came another; on the 24th another; and I should find it hard now to count the number since: and they hardly resemble British storms, but rather Arctic storms in a certain remarkable something of personalness, and a carousing rowdiness, and a Tartarus dark, that I can hardly half describe. That night at Guildford, after butting about and getting very tired, I threw myself upon a pew in a Norman church with two east apses, called St. Mary's, using the pulpit-cushion for pillow; a little lamp, turned low, burned some distance from me, whose ray served me for *veilleuse* through the night, only one old dame in a chapel on the south side of the chancel, whom I mistrusted, being there with me; and there I lay hearkening, for after all I hardly slept, while over me vogued the megaphones of the immense tempest. Happily I had taken care to close up everything, or, I feel sure, the roof must have gone; and I communed with myself, thinking: "I, poor man, lost in this conflux of infinitudes and vortex of Being, what can become of me, my God?

For dark, dark, is this void into which from solid ground I am now gone a trillion furlongs down, the toy of all the whirlwinds: and it would have been better for me to have deceased with the dead, and never to have seen the tenebrousness and turbulence of the ineffable, nor to have heard the thrilling bleakness of the winds of eternity, when they yearn, and plead, and whimper, and when they vociferate and blaspheme, and when they reason and intrigue and entreat, and when they despair and faint, which ear should never hear: for they mean to eat me up, I know, these vast darks, and soon like chaff I shall pass, leaving this scene to them."

So till the morning I lay mumping, with shudderings and cowerings: for the shocks of the storm pervaded the locked nave to my heart; and there were hubbubs of thunder that night, my God, like callings and laughs and banterings bawled across from hill-top to hill-top in Hell.

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Well, in the morning, going down the steep of the High Street, I found a young nun at the bottom whom I had observed the previous evening with a troop of girls in uniform opposite the Guildhall halfway up the street, she having been spun down arm-over-arm; and boughs of trees fleeing, and huddled houses, and clouds of leaves reeling, were all about me that bleak morning.

This Guildford being a junction, before again setting out in the afternoon when the gale had lulled, having got an A. B. C. and a railway-map, I decided upon my line, feeling certain now of making London, only thirty miles away; and about five o'clock was beyond Surbiton, expecting every minute to see the city, until night fell; and still, at considerable risk, I went, as I thought, forward: but no London was there, I having, in fact, been on some loop-line, and beyond Surbiton gone wrong again; for the next nightfall I found myself at Wokingham.

There I slept on a mat in the passage of a tavern named The Rose, for there was a mad Russian-looking man with projecting teeth on a bed in the house, whose appearance I did not like, and I too tired to walk further; and, setting out early again the next morning, at 10 a.m. I was at Reading.

The notion of navigating the land by the same means as the sea, natural as it was, had not occurred to me; but at the first sight of a compass in a shop-window near the river at Reading, my difficulties as to reaching any particular place vanished: for a chart or map, the compass, a divider, and, in the case of long distances, a quadrant, were all that were necessary to change an engine into a land-ship, one choosing the lines which ran closest to one's course whenever they did not run precisely.

Thus provided, I ran out from Reading in the evening, while there was still some light, having spent there nine hours, this being the town where I first observed that crush of humanity which I afterwards met in towns west of London, the English here quite equal in number to the foreigners, and enough of both, God knows: houses in every room of which, and on the stairs, the dead overlay each other, and in the streets points where only on bodies was it possible to step.

I went into the County Gaol, from which, as I had read, the prisoners had been set free, and there found the same crowdedness, cells occupied by ten, corridors rough-paved with faces and old-clothes shops of robes; and in the parade-ground, against one wall, a mass of stuff, like tough grey clay mixed with rags and trickles of gore, where a cram as of hydraulic horse-power must have acted.

At a corner near the biscuit-factory I saw a boy, whom I believe to have been blind, standing jammed, on his wrist a chain, at the end of the chain a dog, he in a haphazard posture from which I conjectured that he and chain and dog had been lifted and placed so by the storm of the 7th; and what made it odd was that his arm pointed rather outward over the dog, so that he looked a drunken fellow setting his dog at me; indeed, all the dead were very mauled and flurried by the storm, and the earth seemed to be making an abortive effort to sweep her streets.

Well, some way out from Reading I found a flower-seed farm looking dead in some plots, in others flourishing rank; and here afresh, fluttering near the engine, three little winged aurelians in the evening air.

After which I passed some crowds of crowded trains on the down-line, two in

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collision, even the fields on either hand having a populous look, as if people, when trains and vehicles failed, had set to tramping westward in caravans and streams.

On coming to a tunnel close to Slough, I remarked round the foot of the arch a mass of wooden *débris*, and, as I moved through, was alarmed by the bumping of the engine jumping across bodies; at the other end more *débris*; and I supposed that a company of desperate folk had made the tunnel air-tight at the two arches and provisioned themselves, in the hope to live there till the day of destiny was ended; whereupon their barricades must have been crashed through by some up-train and themselves crushed; or else, other crowds, crazy to share their cave of refuge, had battered down the boardings: this latter, as I afterward found, being an everyday event.

I should soon have come to London now, but, by bad luck, met an up-train on the metals with not a soul in it, and there was nothing to do but to tranship with all my things to its engine, which I found in good condition, with coal and water; and I set it going—a hateful backache, I already black from hair to toes. However, by half-past ten, when I found myself stopped by another train, I was only four hundred yards from Paddington, and walked the rest of the way among trains within which the dead still stood upright, propped by one another, and over rails where bodies were as ordinary and cheap as waves on the sea, or twigs in a forest: for throngs had given chase on foot to moving trains, or forerun them in the frenzied hope of inducing them to stop.

I came to the great shed of glass and girders which is the station, the night perfectly soundless, moonless, starless, the hour about eleven; and now I saw that trains, in order to move at all, must have moved through a slough of bodies that had been pushed from behind, and formed a packed mass on metals; and I knew that they *had* moved; nor could *I* now move, unless I decided to wade, for flesh was everywhere, on roofs of trains, cramming the intervals betwixt an army-park of vehicles carpeting that district of London; and all here that odour of blossoms, which nowhere yet, save on one sickening ship, had failed, was now overcome by another.

I found later that all the generating-stations that I visited must have been shut down prior to the arrival of the doom; also that gasworks had been abandoned some time prior: so that this city of dreadful night, in which, at the moment when silence choked it, not less than twenty millions swarmed and droned, must have more resembled the shades of Orcus than aught to which my imagination can compare it.

I got out from the station, with ears, God knows, that still awaited the accustomed noising, but, habituated as I now was to that void of soundlessness, I was overwhelmed in a new awe, when, instead of lights and wheels rolling, I saw the long street which I knew brood lugubrious as Babylons grass-grown, and heard a shocking silence, uniting with the silence of those lights of eternity on high.

* * *

I could not drive any vehicle for some time, for all thereabout was practically a block; but near the Park, which I attained by stooping among wheels and selecting my foul steps, I boarded a brougham, found in it petrol, set the lamps burning, removed with averted abhorrence four bodies, mounted, broke that populous dumbness, and through streets nowhere empty of bodies went humming eastward my bumpy and besputtered way.

* * *

That I should have persevered, with so much trouble, in coming to this unbounded catacomb, now seems fantastic of me: for by that time I could hardly have expected to find any other like myself, though I cherished, I remember, the (irrational) hope of yet somewhere finding dog or cat, and would anon think bitterly of Reinhardt, my Arctic dog, which my own hand had shot; but, in reality, a curiosity must have been in me to read the real facts of what had happened, so far as it was known or guessed, and to gloat upon all that drama, and cup of trembling, and pouring out of vials of wrath, in the months prior to the arrival of the end of time—a curiosity which had everywhere made the hunt for papers uppermost in my thoughts; but I had found only four, all antedated to the one that I had read at Dover, though their dates gave me some idea of the period when printing must have ceased, about the 17th of July, three months subsequent to my reaching the Pole, for none I found later than this date; and these contained nothing scientific, only prayers and despairings. On arriving,

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therefore, at London, I made straight for *The Times* office, only stopping at a chemist's in Oxford Street for a bottle of antiseptic to hold near my nose, though, having once left the neighborhood of Paddington, I had hardly any need of this.

So I made my way to the square where the paper was printed, to see that even there the ground was strewn with calpac and pugaree, abayeh and fringed praying-shawl, hob-nail and sandal, lungi and striped silk, all very muddled and mauled; and through the darkling square to the twice-dark pile I passed, to find open the door of an advertisement-office; but, on striking a match, I descried that it had been lit by electricity, and had now to retrace my stumbling steps, till I came to a lamp-shop in an alley, stepping now with care that I might offend no one, for in this enclosed neighborhood I began to undergo tremors, and kept flashing matches, which, so still was the black air, scarcely flickered.

When I got back to the building with a little lighted lamp, I saw a "file" of the paper on a table, and since there were a number of dead there, and I wished to be alone, I took the mass under one arm, the lamp in my other hand, passed behind a counter, and up a stair that led me into a great building and complexity of steps and corridors, where I went peering, the lamp obviously trembling in my hand, for here also were dead. Finally I entered a stately chamber like a board-room, large chairs placed about a table covered with baize, on the table stacks of manuscript permeated with purple dust, and books in book-cases around. This room had been locked upon himself by a single man in a frock-coat, tall, with a pointed grey beard, who at some time had decided to fly from it, for he lay at the door, having dropped dead the moment he opened it; and him, by drawing his boots aside, I removed, locked the door upon myself, sat at the table before the dusty file, and, with the light by my side, began to investigate.

I investigated and read until far into the morning: but God knows . . .

I had not properly filled the little reservoir with oil, so about three in the 'foreday it began to burn sullenly lower, letting sparks, turning the glass grey; and in my heart was the question: "Suppose the lamp goes out before the daylight . . ."

I knew the Pole and cold, I knew them, but to be frozen by terror . . . I read, I say, I conned, I would not stop: but I read that night racked by panics such as have never entered into a heart to fancy, my flesh moving and creeping like a pool which, here and there, a breeze breathes on. Sometimes for three, four, minutes the profound interest of what I read would fix my mind, and then I would peruse an entire column, or two, without consciousness of the sense of one phrase, my brain all drawn away to the innumberable troops that camped about me, to musings on the question on whether they might stand, and accuse me: for the worm was the world, and in the air a stirring of cerements, and the taste of the grey of ghosts seemed to infect my throat, and odours of the loathsome tomb my nose, and deep tones of tollings my ears; at the last the lamp smouldered low, low, and my charnal fancy was chockful with the screwing-down coffins, lych-gates and grave diggers, and the grating of ropes that lower into the grave, and the first thump of the earth upon the lid of that gaunt and gloomy home of the mortal; that lethal look of cold dead fingers I seemed to see before me, the insipidness of dead tongues, the pout of the drowned, and the vapid froths which ridge their lips, until my flesh was moist as with the stale washing-waters of morgues and mortuaries, and with such sweats as corpses sweat, and the mawkish tear which pauses on dead men's cheeks: for what is one insignificant man in his garment of flesh against mobs and armies of the disembodied, he alone with them, and nowhere another, his peer, to whom to appeal against them?

I read, I bent to it: but God knows . . .

If a leaf of the paper, which I warily, thievishly, moved, made but one rustle, how did that reveille boom through the haunted halls of my heart, and there was a cough in my swallow which for long I shirked to cough, till it burst with pitiles turbulence from my lips, sending crinkles of cold through my very soul: for with the words which I read were all mixed up visions of hearses crawling, palls, and wails, and crapes, and piercing shrieks of distraction pealing through vaults of catacombs, and all the mournfulness of that valley of shadow, and the tragedy of corruption.

Twice during the spectral watches of that night the knowledge that the presence of some mute being brooded at my left elbow so thrilled me, that twice I leapt to my feet to confront it with hairs which bristled in frenzy: after which I must have fainted, for when it was broad day I found my brow dropped upon the papers; and I

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resolved that never again after sunset to remain in any house: for that night was enough to kill a horse, my God; and that this is a haunted planet I know.

* * *

What I read in *The Times* was not very definite, for how could it be? but in the main it established inferences which I had myself made, and fairly satisfied my mind.

There had been a battle royal in the paper between my collaborator Professor Stanistreet and Dr. Martin Rogers, and never could I have conceived such an indecorous piece of business, men like them calling one another "tyro," "dreamer," and in one place "blockhead."

Stanistreet denied that the odour of almonds attributed to the advancing cloud could be due to anything but the fancy of the fugitives, because said he, it was unknown that either Cn, HCn, or K_4FeCn_6 had been given out by volcanoes, and the destructiveness of the cloud could only be owing to CO and CO^2; to which Rogers, in an article characterised by extraordinary acrimony, replied that he could not understand how even a "tyro" (!) in chemical and geological phenomena should rush into print with the statement that HCn had not been given out by volcanoes: that it *had* been, he said, was ascertained, though whether it had been could not affect the question as to whether it was being, since cyanogen, as a matter of fact, was not rare in nature, though not directly occurring, being one of the products of the distillation of pit-coal, and found in roots, peaches, almonds and many tropical flora; also it had been actually pointed out as probable by more than one thinker that some salt or salts of Cn, the potassic, or the potassic ferrocyanide, or both, must exist in considerable stores at volcanic depths.

In reply, Stanistreet in a two-column article used the expression "dreamer," and Rogers, when Berlin had been already silenced, finally replied with his red-hot "blockhead."

But, in my opinion, by far the best of the scientific dicta was from the unexpected source of Sloggett, of the Dublin Science and Art Department; he, without fuss, accepted the reports of the fugitives, down to the assertion that the cloud, as it rolled, was mixed from its base to the clouds with tongues of flame, purple, rimmed with rose-colour: this, Sloggett explained, being the characteristic flame of both cyanogen and hydrocyanic acid vapour, which being inflammable, may have become locally ignited in the passage over cities, and only flamed in that limited and languid way because of the ponderous volumes of carbonic anhydride with which they must, of course, be mixed, the dark empurpled colour of the cloud-mass being due to the presence of scoriae of the trappean rocks, basalts, green-stone, trachytes, and the various porphyries.

This article was remarkable for its discernment, because written so early—not long, in fact, after the cessation of communication with Australia, at which date Sloggett stated that the character of the devastation not only proved an eruption —another, but far greater Krakatoa, doubtless in some South Sea region—but indicated that its most active product must be, not CO, but potassic ferrocyanide (K_4FeCn_6), which, undergoing distillation with the products of sulphur in the heat of eruption, produced hydrocyanic acid (HCn); and this volatile acid, he said, remaining in a vaporous state in all climates above a temperature of 26.5° C., might involve the entire earth, travelling chiefly in a direction contrary to the earth's spin, the only regions which would certainly be exempt being the colder parts of the Arctic circles, where the vapour would condense to the liquid state, and descend as rain.

He did not anticipate that vegetation would be deeply affected, unless the event were of inconceivable persistence and activity, for, though the poisonous quality of hydrocyanic acid consisted in its arrest of oxidation, vegetation had two sources of existence—the soil as well as the air; with this exception, all species, down to the lowest forms, would disappear (here was the one point in which he was at fault). For the rest, he fixed the rate of the oncoming cloud at from 100 to 105 miles a day, and the date of eruption as the 14th, 15th, or 16th of April—one, two, or three days after the *Boreal* party reached the Pole; and he ended by saying that, if the facts were as he had stated them, then he could suggest no hiding-place for the race of man, unless such places as mines and tunnels could be made airtight; nor could even they be of use to any considerable number, except in the event of the lethal state of the air being of brief duration.

* * *

I had thought of mines before, but in a

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languid way, until this article, and other things that I read, as it were, struck my brain a slap with the notion. For "there," I said, "if anywhere, shall I find a man . . ."

* * *

I passed out from that building that morning like a man bowed down with age, for the depths of gruesomeness into which I had had glimpses during those hours of gloom made me feeble, my steps tripped, my brain reeled.

I came out into Farrington Street, and at the Circus, where four streets meet, had under my range of vision four fields of bodies, clad, actually in some cases overlying one another, as I had seen at Reading, but here with a more skeleton appearance: for I saw the swollen-looking shoulders, sharp hips, hollow abdomens, and stiff bony limbs of men dead from famine, the whole having the bizarre air of some *macabre* battlefield of marionettes fallen; and, mixed with them, a multitude of vehicles of all sorts, among which I made my way to a shop in the Strand, where I hoped to find all the information which I required about the excavations of the country; but the shutters were up, and I did not wish to make any noise among these people, though the morning was clear, and it was easy to effect an entrance, for I saw a crowbar on a truck; so I moved on to the British Museum, the cataloguing-system of which I knew, and passed in: no one at the reading-room door now to bid me halt, and in all the round of the reading-room not a soul, except one old man with a bag of goitre at his neck, and spectacles, he lying up a book-ladder near the shelves, a "reader" to the last; then, having got at the catalogues, for an hour I was upstairs among the dim sacred galleries of this still place, and at the sight of certain Greek and Coptic papyri, charters, seals, had such a dream of this earth, my good God, as even an angel's pen could not express on paper. Afterwards I went away loaded with half a hundredweight of ordnance-maps which I had stuffed into a bag found in the cloak-room, with three topographical books; then at an instrument-maker's in Holborn got a sextant and theodolite; at a grocer's near the river put into a sack-bag provisions to last me a week or two; and, finding at Blackfriars Bridge wharf-station a sharp white motor-yawl of a few tons, by noon I was cutting my solitary way up the Thames, that flowed as before the Brits were born, and saw it, and built mud-huts there among the forests, and later on the Romans came, and saw it, and called it Tamesis, or Thamesis.

* * *

That midnight, lying asleep on the cabin-cushions of my boat under the lee of an island at Richmond, I had a clear dream, in which something, or someone, came to me, and asked me a question: for it said: "Why do you go seeking another? that you may fall upon him, and kiss him? or that you may fall upon him, and kill him?" And I muttered sullenly in my dream: "I would not kill him. I do not wish to kill anyone."

* * *

What was essential to me was to know, with definiteness, whether I was alone: for some instinct was beginning to whisper me: "Find that out; be sure, be sure: for without assurance you can never be—yourself."

I passed into the Midland Canal, and so northward, leisurely advancing, for I was in no sweat, the weather remaining very

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warm, much of the country still clothed in autumn foliage. I have written, I think, of the terrific recklessness of the temptests witnessed in England since my return: well, the calms were not less intense and novel. This observation was forced upon me: and I could not but be surprised. There seemed no middle course now: if there was a wind, it was a storm; if there was not a storm, no leaf twinkled, not a zephyr fretted the waters. I was reminded of maniacs that laugh now, and rave now —but never smile, and never sigh.

Well, after passing by Leicester on the fourth afternoon, I left my pleasant boat the next morning, carrying maps and compass, and at a small station took engine, bound for Yorkshire, where I loitered away two foolish months, sometimes moving by stream, sometimes by automobile, by bicycle, on foot, till the autumn was quite over.

* * *

I went onward by steam along the coast to a region of iron-ore, alum, and jet-excavations round Whitby and Middlesborough, and at Kettleness went down to a bay in which is a cave called the Hob-Hole, with excavations all round made by jet-diggers and quarrymen: in the cave a herd of cattle, for what purpose put there I cannot conjecture, and in the jet-excavations I found nothing. Further south is the alum-region, as at Sandsend; but as soon as I saw a works, and the gap in the ground like a crater where the lias is quarried, I concluded that here could have been found no hiding. Then from round Whitby and those rough moors I went on to Darlington, not far now from my home: but I would not continue that way; and, after two days' lounging, started for Richmond and the lead mines about Arkengarth Dale, near Reeth.

Five days later I was at the mines: and here I first saw that widespread scene of horror with which I have since become familiar, the story of seven out of ten of them being the same, and brief: selfish "owners," an ousted world, an easy bombardment, and the destruction of all concerned, before the coming of the cloud in many cases. About some of the Durham pit-mouths I have been given the impression that the human race lay collected there, and that the notion of hiding himself in a mine must have entered the head of every man alive, and sent him there.

In these lead mines, as in most veinmining, there are more shafts than in collieries, and hardly any attempt at artificial ventilation, except at rises, winzes and cul-de-sacs; and I found that, though their depth does not exceed three feet, suffocation must often have anticipated the other depth. In nearly every shaft, both uptake and down-take, was a ladder, either of the mine, or of the fugitives; and I was able to descend without difficulty, having dressed myself in a house at the village in a flannel shirt, trousers with circles of leather at the knees, thick boots, and a miner's hat having a socket into which fits a candle; with this and a Davy-lamp, which I carried for many months, I lived for the most part in the depths of the earth, searching for the treasure of a life, to find everywhere, in English duckies and guggs, Pomeranian women in gaudy cloaks, the Walachian, the Mameluk, the Khirgiz, the Bonze, the Imaum, almost every type of man.

* * *

One most brilliant day of spring I walked by the market-cross at Barnard, come at last, though reluctance in my heart, to where I was born: for I said I would go and see my sister Ada, and the other old one; but I leaned and loitered a long time on the bridge at Barnard, gazing up to the craggy height, heavy with wood that waved, and crowned by the Castle-tower, the Tees round the mountain-base sweeping smooth here and sunlit, but a league down, where I thought of going, brawling bedraggled and lacerated, shallow among rocks under reaches of shadow—the shadow of Rokeby Woods; but I shrank from it, and instead, went leisurely up the hill-side to the castle, having in my hand a bag with a meal, up the stair in the castle wall to the top, where in my miner's attire I remained three hours, brooding sleepily upon the scene of lush umbrageous wood which marks the way the river takes, from Marwood Chase up above, and where the brabbling Balder bickers in, down to bowery Rokeby daubed now with browns of autumn, the luxury of umbrage lessening away toward the uplands, where there are etherealised reaches of fields, and in the farthest azure remoteness mirages of lonesome moorland. It was not till near three that I went down along the river; then, near Rokeby, up the old hill: and there, as of old, was the little black square with yellow letters on the gate-wall:

HUNT HILL HOUSE

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No house, I believe, of this countryside was empty of invaders, and they were in Hunt Hill, too—three to the right of the garden-patch, where the lilac, among weeds now, had once grown from rollered grass; and in the bush-wilderness to the left, which had always been wilderness, one more; and in the breakfast-room three; and in the new clinker-built attachment two, half under the billiard-table; and in her room overlooking the porch the long form of my mother on her bed, her left temple battered in; and beside the bed, face down on the planks, my black-haired sister Ada in a night-dress.

Of the men and women who died they two alone had burying, for I delved a hole with the stable-spade beneath the cedar, and wound them in sheets for shrouds, feet and form and countenance, and, not without throes and qualms, bore and buried them there.

* * *

One day, standing in that region of rack and sea called Cornwall Point, whence one can watch the postillion rocks of Land's End dash out into the sea, and the flash of all the wild white steeds of the sea between, and not a building in sight, on that day I finished what I may name my official inquisition.

In going away from that place, walking northward, I came upon a house by the sea, a beautiful house of bungalow type with a sea-side expression, its special feature a spacious loggia or verandah, sheltered by the overhanging of the upper story, the exterior of rough-hewn blocks with a batter, the roofs of low pitch, covered with green slates, a feeling of strength and repose heightened by the long horizontal lines, at one end of the loggia a turret containing a study or nook; and in this place I lived three weeks. It was the house of the poet Machen, whose name, as soon as I saw it, I remembered well, and he had married a beauty of eighteen, obviously Spanish, who lay on the bed in the large bright bedroom to the right of the loggia, beside her a baby with an india-rubber comforter in its mouth, both mother and child wonderfuly preserved, she still quite lovely, white brow under curves or raven hair.

The poet, though, had not died with them, but was in the room behind in a loose silky-grey jacket, at his desk—writing a poem! writing, I could see, wildly quick, the place littered with the written leaves—at three o'clock in the morning, when, as I knew, the cloud overtook this end of Cornwall, and stopped him, and put his head to rest on the desk; and the little wife must have got sleepy, waiting for it to arrive, probably sleepless for nights previously, and gone to bed, he perhaps promising to follow to die with her, but bent upon finishing his poem, writing feverishly on, running a race with the cloud, thinking, no doubt, "just two couplets more," until the thing came, and put his head on the desk; and I do not know that I ever encountered anything so complimentary to my race as this Machen, and his race with the cloud: for it is clear now that the better kind of those poet men did not write to please the dim inferior tribes who might read them, but to deliver themselves of the divine warmth that swarmed within their breast, and, if all the readers had been dead, still they'd have written, and it would be for God to read that they wrote.

At any rate, I was so pleased with these poor people, that I stayed with them three weeks, sleeping on a couch in the drawing-room, a place rich in lovely pictures and faded flowers, like all the house: for I would not touch the young mother to remove her. And, finding on Machen's desk a note-book with soft covers, dappled red and yellow, I took it, and in the little turret-nook wrote day after day for hours this account of what has happened, and I think I may continue to write, for I find in it a comfort and company.

* * *

In the Severn Valley, somewhere in the plain between Gloucester and Cheltenham, in a rather lonely spot, I at that time travelling on a motor-bicycle, I spied a curious erection, went to it, and found it perhaps fifty feet square, made of brick, the flat roof, too, of brick, and not one window, and only one door, which I found open, rimmed with india-rubber, air-tight when closed. Inside I came upon fifteen English people of the dressed class, except two, who were bricklayers: six ladies, nine men; and, farther within, two more, men, who had their throats cut, whether through sacrificing themselves for the others when breathing difficulties commenced, or killed by the others, was not clear: along one wall provisions; and a chest full of oxide of manganese, with an apparatus for producing oxygen—a foolish thing, for additional oxygen could not

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alter the quantity of carbonic anhydride breathed out, this being a narcotic poison; and finally they must have opened the door, and so met their death. I believe that this erection was run up by their own hands under the direction of the two bricklayers, for they could not, I suppose, have got workmen, except on the condition of the workmen's admission: on which condition they would employ as few as possible.

In general, I observed that the rich must have been more urgent and earnest in seeking escape than the others: for the poor realised only the near and visible, lived in to-day, and cherished the notion that to-morrow would be the model of to-day. In an out-patients' waiting-room, for instance, in the Gloucester infirmary, I chanced to see an astonishing thing: four old women in shawls, come to have their ailments medicined on the day of doom; and these, I concluded, had been unable to realise that anything would occur to the daily old earth which they knew and had footed with assurance on: for, if everyone was to perish, they must have felt, who would preach in the Cathedral on Sunday evenings? In an adjoining chamber sat an old doctor at a table, his stethoscope-tips still clinging in his ears, a man with bared chest before him; and I said to myself: "Well, this old man, too, died doing his work. . . ."

In one surgical ward of this infirmary the patients had died, not of the poison, nor of suffocation, but of hunger—the doctors, or someone, having made the ward air-tight, locking them in, for I came upon a heap of maimed shapes, mere skeletons, crowded round the door within; and I knew that their death was not due to the cloud-poison, for the pestilence of the ward was uninformed with that almond charm which did not fail to have embalming effects upon the bodies which it saturated: so that I rushed from that place; and, thinking it a pity and a danger that such a pest should be, I set to work to collect things to burn the building.

It was while I was seated in an easy-chair in the street the following evening, smoking, watching the combustion of this structure, that something was suddenly born in me, something out of Hell, and I smiled a smile that never man smiled. And I said: "I will burn: I will return to London. . . ."

* * *

On this Eastward journey, stopping for the night at Swindon, I had a dream: for I dreamed that a little old man, brown, bald, with a bowed back, whose beard ran in one streamlet of silver from his chin to reach out over the floor, said to me: "You think that you are alone on the earth, its despot; well, have your fling; but as sure as God lives, as God lives, as God lives"—six times—"sooner or later, later or sooner, you will meet another. . . ."

And I started from that slumber with the brow of a corpse, wet with sweat. . . .

* * *

I returned to London on the 29th of March, arriving within a hundred yards of the Northern Station one windy dark evening near eight, where I alighted to walk to Euston Road, then eastward along it, till I came to a shop which I knew to be a jeweller's, though it was too dark to discern any painted words. The door, to my annoyance, being locked, like almost all the shop-doors in London, I went looking about for something heavy, found a labourer, cut one boot from the shrivelled foot, and beat at the glass till it came raining, then entered.

No horrors now at that clatter of glass; no sick qualms; my pulse steady; my head high; my step royal; my eye cold.

* * *

I was going to a hotel, and was not sure of finding sufficient candlesticks, for I had acquired the habit of sleeping with at least sixty about me; and their pattern, age, material, was of importance to me: so I selected from that shop ten of ecclesiastical brass, then found a bicycle, pumped it, tied my bundle to it, and set off; but I had not gone ten jolted yards, when a fork snapped, and, on finding myself across the knees of a Highland soldier, I flew with a shower of kicks upon the foolish thing: and this was my last attempt in that way in London, the streets being in an unsuitable condition.

Throughout that gloomy night it blew great guns: and during nearly three weeks, until London was no more, there was a booming of winds that seemed to bemoan her doom.

* * *

I slept in a Bloomsbury hotel, and, waking the next day at ten, ate with shiverings in the banqueting-hall, went out then,

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and, beneath drear skies flying low, walked all the way to the West District, accompanied by a prattle of flapping flags—fluttering robes and rags—and grotesque glimpses of decay. I was warmly clad, but but the bizarrerie of the European clothes which I wore had become an offence and mockery in my eyes, so at the first moment I set out whither I knew that I should discover such clothes as a man might wear: to the Turkish Embassy in Bryanston Square.

I had been acquainted with Redouza Pasha, but could not recognise him here in an invasion of hanums in their veils, fierce-looking Caucasians in skins of beasts, a Sheik-ul-Islam in his green cloak, three emirs in cashmere turbans, two tziganes, their brown mortality more abominable still than the Western's; but upstairs I soon came to a boudoir odorous of that reclusion and dim mystery of Orient homes: a door encrusted with mother-of-pearl, sculptured roof, candles clustered in tulips and roses of opal, a brazen brasero, and, all in disarray, the silken chemise, the winter-cafetan doubled with furs, cabinets, sachets of aromas, babooshes, stuffs. When, after two hours, I went from the house, I was bathed, anointed, combed, scented, robed.

* * *

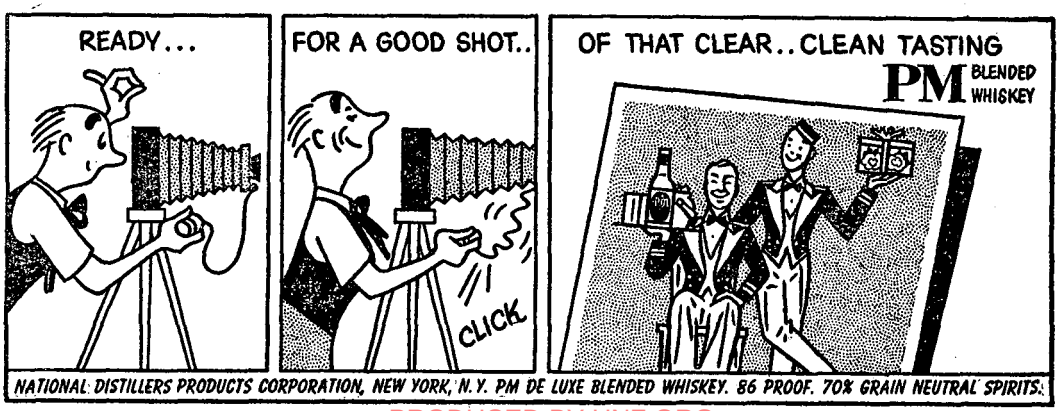
I had said to myself: "I will ravage and riot in my kingdoms. I will rage like the Caesars, and be a withering blight where I pass like Sennacherib, and wallow in soft delights like Sardanapalus; I will raise me a palace wherein to stroll and parade my monarchy before the Gods, its stones of gold, with rough frontispiece of ruby, and cupola of opal, and porticos of topaz: and there were many men to the eye, but there was One only, really: and I was he." And always I knew it—some whisper which whispered me: "*You* are the Arch-one, the motive of the world, Adam, and the rest of men not much." And they are gone—all! all!—as no doubt they merited: and I, as was meet, remain. And there are wines, opiums, haschish; and there are oils and spices, fruits and oysters, and soft Cyclades, luxurious Orients. I will be restless and dreadful in my territories; and again, I will be languishing and fond. I will say to my soul: "Be full."

* * *

I watch my mind, as in that old time I used to watch a precipitate in a test-tube.

I am very averse to work of any sort, so that the necessity for performing the simplest little labours will rouse me to indignation; but if a thing will contribute greatly to my every-growing voluptousness, I will undergo a considerable amount of drudgery to accomplish it, though without steady effort, being liable to whims.

In the country I became pretty irritable at the necessity which confronted me of sometimes cooking some vegetable—the only food which I was forced to take some trouble over, for meats and fish, some delicious, I find already prepared in guises which will remain good centuries after my death, should I ever die; in Gloucester, however, I found peas, asparagus, olives, and other greens, already prepared to be eaten without base cares, and these, I now see, exist everywhere in stores that may be named boundless: so I now take my repasts without more cark than when a man had to carve his fowl, though that mote I sometimes find tiresome. There remains the degradation of lighting fires for warmth, for the fire at the hotel always goes out while I sleep; but that is an inconvenience only of this zone.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During the afternoon of my second day in London I sought out a strong motor in Holborn, oiled it a little, set off over Blackfriars Bridge, making for Woolwich through that more putrid London of the south; and one after the other I connected eight drays and cabs to my motor behind, having cut away the withered horses, using the reins, &c., as couplings: and with this train I rumbled eastward.

Halfway to Woolwich I happened to look at my old silver chronometer of *Boreal*-days—and how I can be rushed into these agitations by a nothing, a *nothing*, my good God, I do not know! Just by the fact that the hands chanced to point to 3.10, the moment at which the clocks of London stopped—for each town has its thousand weird fore-fingers, pointing, pointing still, to the moment of doom—3.10 on a Sunday afternoon in London.

I first observed it in going up the river on the face of that "Big Ben," and now find that they all, all, have this 3.10 mania, time-keepers still—of the end of Time; noting for ever more that one moment: for the cloud-mass of powdery *scoriae* must have instantly stopped their escapement, and they had fallen silent with man; but in their insistence upon this particular minute I had found something so solemn, yet mock-solemn, ironic, and as it were addressed to *me*, that when my own watch dared to point to the same moment, I was thrown into one of those panting paroxysms, half rage, half horror, which have hardly harrowed me since I abandoned the *Boreal*. On the morrow, alas, another was in store for me; and once more on the morrow after.

* * *

My train was so execrably slow, that not until five did I arrive at the Woolwich Royal Arsenal, and, as it was then too late to work, I uncoupled the motor, and turned back for London; but, overcome by languor, I got candles, stopped at the Greenwich Observatory, and within that gloomy pile burned my watch-lights for the night, musing upon the tempest belling.

But, astir early, I was back by ten at the Arsenal, and started to analyse some of that vast and multiple entity. Parts of it seemed to have been abandoned in undisciplined haste, and in the Cap Factory, which I first entered, I found tools by which to effect an entry into any part, my first search being for time-fuses, of which I required some thousands, and after a hunt found a host arranged in rows in a range of buildings called the Ordnance Store Department.

I then descended, walked back to the wharf, brought up my train, and began to lower the fuses in bagfulls by ropes through a chute, letting go each rope as the fuses reached the dray. However, on winding one fuse, I found that the mechanism would not go, choked with *scoriae;* and I had to resign myself to the task of opening and dusting every one; a wretched labour in which I spent that day like a labourer till about four, when I threw them to the devil, having done two hundred; then hummed back in the motor to London.

* * *

That same evening as it was becoming dark I paid a visit to my old self in Harley Street, a bleak tempest that hooted like whooping-cough sweeping the streets: and at once I saw that even I had been invaded, for my door swung open, banging, a catch preventing it from slamming; and in the passage my car-lamp shewed a young man who seemed seated as if in sleep with dropped forehead, a silk-hat, tilted back, pressed down upon his head to the ears; and, lying, six more, a girl with Arlesienne head-dress, a Deal lifeboat's-man, and three of uncertain race; the first room—the waiting-room—still more numerously occupied, though there still on the table lies the volume of *Punch*, the *Gentlewoman*, and the book of London views in heliograph. Behind this, descending the two steps to the study and consulting-room, I found as ever the revolving-top desk, but on my little shabby-red sofa a large lady too big for it in shimmering grey silk, round her left wrist a *trousseau* of gold trinkets, her head dropped right back, almost severed by an infernal gash from the throat. Here were two old-silver candlesticks, which I lit, went upstairs, and in the drawing-room sat my old housekeeper, placidly dead in a rocking-chair, her left hand pressing down a batch of the piano-keys, among many strangers. But she was very good, had locked my bed-room against intrusion, and, as the door stands across a corner behind a green-baize curtain, it had not been seen, at least not forced. I found the key hung on the switch by the door: and there lay my bed intact, and everything tidy.

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But what interested me in that room was the thing on the wall between wardrobe and dressing-table—that gilt frame—and that man painted within it there: myself in oils, done by—no, I forgot his name now, towering celebrity he was; in a studio in St. John's Wood, I remember, he did it, and people said that it was quite a work of art. I suppose I was standing before it thirty minutes that night, holding up the bits of candle, lost in wonder, in amused contempt at that thing there. It is I, certainly, that I must admit, the high-curving brow—really a King's brow, after all, it strikes me now—and that vacillating look about the eyes, that dear, vacillating look of mine: for although it is rather a staring look, yet one can almost see the pupils stir from side to side: very well done. And the longish face; and the rather thin, stuck-out moustache, shewing both lips which pout a bit; and the hair, nearly black; and the rather visible paunch; and, oh, Heaven, the neat cravat—ah, it must have been that—the cravat—that made me burst into laughter! "Adam Jeffson," I muttered when it was over, "could that thing in the frame have been you?"

I cannot quite state why the tendency toward Orientalism — Oriental dress — all the manner of an Oriental monarch—has taken full possession of me, but so it is: for surely I am hardly any longer a Western, "modern" mind, but a primitive, Eastern one. Certainly, that cravat in the frame has receded a million leagues, ten thousand f o r g o t t e n aeons, from me! Whether this is a result of my own personality, of old acquainted with Eastern notions, or whether, perhaps, it is the natural accident to any soul emancipated from trammels, I do not know; but I seem to have gone right back to the beginnings, to resemblance with man in his first, simple, gaudy conditions: my hair, as I sit here, already hanging an oiled string down my back; my beard sweeping scented in two opening whisks to my ribs; I have on the *izar,* a pair of drawers of yomani cloth like cotton, with yellow stripes; over this a shirt, or *quamis,* of white silk, reaching to my calves; over this a vest of crimson, gold-embroidered, the *sudeyree;* over this a khaftan of silk, green-striped, reaching to the ankles, encircled at the waist with a gaudy shawl of Cashmere for girdle; over this a wide-flowing torrent of white drapery, warm, lined with ermine; on my head the skull-cap, covered by a high cap, scarlet with blue tassel; on my feet blue-morocco shoes covered over by thick crimson-morocco babooshes. My ankles—my ten fingers—my wrists—are heavy with gold and silver ornaments; and in my ears, which, with considerable pain, I bored three days since, are two needle-splinters, to prepare the holes for rings.

* * *

O Liberty! I am free. . . .

* * *

While I was going to visit my home in Harley Street, at the moment when I turned north from Oxford Street, this thought, hissed into my ear, was all at once seething in me. "If now I should lift my eyes, and see a man walking yonder—*at the corner there*—turning out of Harewood Place, what, my good God, should I do?" and I turned my eyes, leering suspicious eyes, furtively turned, and I peered deeply with lowering brows.

Horribly frequent has this nonsense become with me—in streets—in nooks of the country: the assurance that, if I but glance just *there,* I shall see—*must see*—a man; and glance I must, though I perish; and when I glance, though each hair creeps and rears, yet in my glare, I feel, in monarch indignation, my neck sticks lofty as sovereignty itself, and on my forehead sits all the lordliness of Persepolis and Serapis.

To what point of wantonness this awfulness of royalty may lead me, I do not know. I will watch, and see. It is written, "It is not good for man to be alone"; but, good or no, the arrangement of one-planet-one-inhabitant already seems to me, not merely a natural, but the *only* natural and proper, condition: so much so, that any other arrangement has now, to my mind, a kind of unlikely, wild and far-fetched unreality, like the utopian schemes of dreamers and faddists.

That the earth should have been turned out for *me*—that London should have been erected in order that *I* might enjoy the heroic spectacle of its destruction—that history should have existed to accumulate for *my* pleasures its inventions, its stores of wine and spice—no more extraordinary does it all seem to me than to some little duke of the old scheme of things seemed the "owning" of fields of which his forefathers slew the holders; but what strikes me with some surprise is that the new scheme should have come to seem *so* com-

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monplace and natural—in nine months. The mind of Adam Jeffson is adaptable.

* * *

Well, most of the next day I spent in a chamber at Woolwich, dusting out, sometimes oiling, time-fuses: a job in which I acquired such ease, that each finally kept me just ninety seconds, so that by evening I had done 500, these little things being pretty simple, easily made, most containing a tiny dry-cell which sparks at the running-down moment, while others ignite by striking. I arranged them in rows in the van, and passed the night in an inn near the Barracks, having brought candlesticks from London: and I so arranged the furniture round the bed as to get an altar of candles mixed with vases containing palms, amid which I scattered a fragrance of ambergris from some Arab sachets which I had, and in the bed a bottle of sweet Chypre-wine, with bonbons, nuts and havannas; and, lying there, I meditated with a smile which I knew to be malign upon that lust in me which was urging me through all those drudgeries at the Arsenal, I who shirked all work as unroyal.

So, however, it was: and the next morning I was at it again, my fingers stiff with cold, for the gale blew keen; but before noon I had 800 fuses, and, judging these sufficient to begin with, got into the motor, and took it round to a place called the East Laboratory, a series of buildings, where I knew that I should find whatever I wanted and I prepared my mind for a day's labour. In this place I found stores on stores: mountains of percussion-caps, more chambers of fuses, small-arm cartridges, shells, and all those murderous chemicals, amaking and made, with which man exterminated himself: clever, and yet. . . . Queer mixed people, like aegipeds, and mermaids, and absurd immature births.

At any rate, their lyddites, melanites, cordites, galignites, dynamites, toluols, powders, jellies, oils, marls, came in very well for their own destruction: for by three o'clock I had so worked, that I had on the first vehicles the phalanx of fuses, with kegs and cartridge-boxes full of powder, of explosive cottons and gelatines, liquid nitro-glycerine, earthy dynamite, with bombs, reels of cordite, two pieces of tarred cloth, an iron ladle, a spade, a crowbar; then the cabs containing coal and cans of oil. And first, in the Laboratory, I connected a fuse with a huge tin of blasting-gelatine, and I timed the fuse for the midnight of the seventh day thence; after which I visited the Carriage Department, the Ordnance Store Department, the Powder Magazines in the Marshes, traversing, it seemed to me, miles of building; and in some I laid coal-and-oil with an explosive in suitable spots, and in some an explosive alone: and all I timed for ignition at midnight of the seventh day.

Hot now and sotty, I moved through the town, stopping regularly at every hundredth door: and I laid the faggots of conflagration, timing them for ignition at midnight of the seventh day.

* * *

Whatever door I found closed against me I drove at it with venom.

* * *

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Shall I commit it to paper? that deep secret of the human organism? . . . As I worked, I waxed wicked as a demon! and with lowered neck, and outpush of the belly, and the blasphemous strut of tragic play-actors, I went: for here was no harmless fireworks, but the crime of arson, and a devilish, though vague, malevolence, and the rage to grind and raven and riot was upon me like a dog-madness, all the mood of Nero and Nebuchadnezzar, and I sent up such hisses and giggles of challenge to Heaven that day as never yet has man let out. But this way lies frenzy. . . .

* * *

I was angered, however, that day of the faggot-laying, even in the midst of my feeling of omnipotence, by the slowness of the motor, which made me kick it; and at that hill near the Old Dover Road the thing refused to move, the train too heavy for my horse-power: so there I stood impotent; no other motor visible, and most of the motors with exhausted accumulators, ruined magnetos, choked needle-valves, waterless or petrolless; there was a tram just there, but the notion of setting-up an electric station, with or without automatic stoking-gear, presented so hideous a picture of labour to me, that I would not entertain it. After half an hour, however, I remembered seeing hereabouts a power-station driven by turbines: so I uncoupled the motor, covered the drays with tarpaulins, and went driving about,

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not caring whom I crushed; and, presently finding the station in a by-street, I went in by a window.

I wanted to have my will quickly accomplished. I got some cloths and dusted a commutator; ran and turned the water into the turbines; set the lubricators running on the bearings; adjusted the generator-brushes; and ran up to the gallery to switch the current on to the line.

By this time it was getting dark: so I hurried out, got into the car, and was off down three by-streets, till I turned into my own street; but had no sooner reached it than I pulled up with a jerk, with a shout of astonishment—the cursed street all lit up and gay! three arc-lamps not far apart revealing every feature of a field of dead; and there was a thing there the grinning impression of which I shall carry to my grave, a thing which spelled at me, and ceased, and began again, and ceased, and spelled at me: for above a shop was a flag, red with white letters, fluttering on the gale the name "Metcalfe's Stores"; and under the flag, stretched across the house, was the thing which spelled, letter by letter, in letters of brilliance deliberately, coming to an end, and going back to begin again spelling

DRINK
ROBORAL

And that was the last word of civilised Man to me, Adam Jeffson—its ultimate gospel and message: *Drink Roboral!*

I was put into such a passion by this ribaldry, which affected me like the laughter of skeletons, that I rushed from the motor, threw two of my fuses at it, then went looking for stones to stone it; but no stones: and I had to stand there enduring that rape of my eyes, its dogged iteration, its taunting ogle—D,R,I,N,K R,O,B,O,R,A,L.

It was one of those advertisements worked by a little motor driven by the station, I had now set it going, and this nonsense stopped my operations for that day, since it was late: so I drove to the hotel which I had made my home in sullen and weary mood: for I knew that Roboral would not cure the least of all my sores.

* * *

The next morning I awoke in another frame of mind, disposed to idle, and let things slide. After washing in cold rose-water and descending to the *salle-à-manger*, where I had laid my morning-meal the previous evening, I promenaded the only one of these sombrous tufted corridors in which were not more than two dead, though behind the doors on both sides I knew that they lay in plenty. When I was warmed, I again went down, got four cans from other motors, and drove away—to Woolwich, as I thought: but instead of crossing the river by Blackfriars, I went more eastward, and, having passed into Cheapside, which was impassable, unless I crept, was going to turn back, when I observed a phonograph-shop, into which I got by a side-door, seized by curiosity to hear what I might hear: so I put one, with a lot of records, into the car, for there was still a strong peach-odour in this closed shop which displeased me; then proceeded westward through by-streets, seeking some house into which to go from the winds, when I saw the Parliament-house: and thither I went with my two parcels, walking into this old place along dusty busts, to deposit my boxes on a table beside a brass thing lying there, what they called "the Mace"; and I sat to hear.

Unfortunately, the phonograph was a clock-work one, and, when I wound it, would not go, so that I got angry, nearly

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tore it to pieces, and was half for kicking it; but there was a man seated in the chair which they called "the Speaker's Chair," who was in such a posture, that he had, every time I glanced at him, an air of bending forward with interest to watch what I was doing, a Mohrgrabim sort of a man, very dark, with crinkled hair, keffie, and flowing robe, probably a Galla, present with him being seven people only about the benches, mostly leaning forward with rested head, so that this room had quite a void and solitary mood; but this Galla, or Bedouin, with his grotesque interest in my doings, restrained my hands; and at last, by dint of poking and dusting, I got the phonograph to go.

And all that morning, and far into the afternoon, forgetful of food and of the cold which gradually possessed me, I sat there listening, musing—cylinder after cylinder: frivolous songs, orchestras, voices of famous men whom I had talked with, and shaken their solid hands, talking afresh to me, though rather thick-tongued and hoarse, from out of the vague void beyond the grave, most strange.

* * *

I found this brown room of the Commons-house, with its green benches, and grilled galleries, so agreeable to my mood, that I went again the next day and listened to more records until they wearied me: for what I had was an itch to hear scandals and revelations of the festering heart, but these records, got from a shop, divulged nothing. I wandered about the dusty committee-rooms and recesses of this considerable place. In one room another foolishness seized upon me, shewing how my whims have become more imperious within me than all the laws of the Medes: for in that Room No. 15 I found a young policeman, flat on his back, who pleased me: his helmet tilted under his head, and near one white-gloved hand an official envelope, that stagnant quiet apartment still peach scented, and he gave not the slightest smell, though he was stoutish, his countenance now the colour of ashes, in each cheek a hole large as a sixpence, his lids flimsy, vaulted, fallen into their caverns, from under whose fringe of lash was whispered the word *"Eternity."*

His hair seemed long for a policeman, probably had grown since death; but what interested me about him was the envelope in his hand: for "what," I asked myself, "was this fellow doing here with an envelope at three on a Sunday afternoon?" and this causing me to look close, I saw by a mark at the left temple that he had been shot or felled; whereupon I was thrown into a rage, thinking that this poor man had been killed in the execution of his duty, when many had fled their post to pray or riot: so I said to him: "Well, D. 47, you sleep very well; and you did well, dying so; I am pleased with you, and decree that by my own hand you shall be distinguished with burial": and this wind so possessed me, that I at once went out, and with the crowbar and spade from the car went into Westminster Abbey, where I routed up a grave-slab in the south transept, and began to dig; but, I do not know how, before I had digged a foot the impulse forsook me, so I left off, promising to resume it; but nothing was ever done, for the next day I was at Woolwich, and busy enough about other things.

* * *

During the next four days I worked with a fever on me, and a map of London before me.

There were places in that city!—secrets, vastnesses, horrors! In the wine-vaults at London Docks was a vat which must have contained twenty thousand gallons, and with a dancing heart I laid a train there; the tobacco-warehouse must have covered eighty acres, and there I laid a fuse; in a house near Regent's Park, shut in from the street by shrubbery and a wall, I saw a thing . . . ! and what shapes a great city hid I only now know.

* * *

I left no quarter unremembered, taking a train of eight vehicles, now drawn by three motors, with which I visited West Ham and Kew, Finchley and Clapham, Dalston and Marylebone; deposited piles in the Guildhall, in Holloway Gaol, in the Tower, in the Parliament-house, in St. Giles' Workhouse, under the organ of St. Paul's, in the Kensington Museum, in Whiteley's place, in the Trinity House, in the Office of Works, in the recesses of the British Museum; in a hundred warehouses, in five hundred shops, in a thousand dwellings. And I timed them all for ignition at midnight of the 23rd of April.

By five in the afternoon of the 22nd, when I left my train in Maida Vale, and drove alone to the house on high ground

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near Hampstead Heath which I had chosen, the thing was finished.

* * *

The morning dawned, and I was early astir: for I had much to do.

I intended to make for the coast the next day, so had to select a motor, store it, have it in a place of safety; and I had to tow another vehicle stored with trunks of fuses, books, clothes, and other little things.

My first journey was to Woolwich, whence I took all that I might ever want in the way of mechanism; thence to the National Gallery, where I cut from their frames the "Vision of St. Helena," Murillo's "Boy Drinking," and "Christ at the Column"; and thence to the Embassy to bathe, anoint my body, and dress.

As I had anticipated and hoped, a blustering storm was blowing from the north.

* * *

The house at Hampstead, which no doubt still stands, is of agreeable design in quite a stone and rural style, with breadths of wall surface, two coped gables, mullioned windows, oversailing verge-roofs; but, rather spoiling it, a tower at the south-east corner, on the top floor of which I had slept the previous night. There I had a box of pallid tobacco compounded with rose-leaves and opium, found in a foreign house in Seymour Street, also a true Saloniki hookah, with Cyclades wine, nuts, and so on, and a gold harp stamped with the name of Krasinski, taken from his house in Portland Street.

But so much did I find to do that day, so many odd things turned up which I thought that I would take, that it was not until six that I drove finally northward through Camden Town. And now an awe possessed my soul at the solemn noise which everywhere encompassed me, an ineffable awe, a blessed terror. Never could I have dreamt of aught so great and strong. Everywhere over my head there rushed southward with outstretched throat and a wing of haste a smoke inflamed; and, mixed with the roaring, I heard hubbubs of tumblings and rumblings, unaccountable, like the moving-about of furniture in the houses of Titans, while pervading the air was a most weird and tearful crying, as it were threnody and nenia, and wild wails of pain, dying swan-songs, and all lamentations at cosmic break-up and tribulation. Yet I was aware that at such an hour the flames must be far from general; in fact, they had not well commenced.

* * *

As I had left a region of houses without combustibles to the south of the house which I was to occupy, and as the storm was from the north, I simply left my two vehicles at the door without fear; then went up the tower, lit the candles, ate voraciously of the dinner which I had left ready; then with hands which shivered arranged the bedclothes upon which to drop in the morning hours, opposite the wall where the bed was being a Gothic window, large, with a low sill, looking south: so that I could recline at ease in the easy-chair, and see.

It had been a young lady's room, for on the toilette were crystals of Laliqué, a plait of brown hair, powders, *rouge-aux-lèvres*, one little bronze slipper, and knickknacks, and I loved her and hated her, though I did not see her anywhere; anyway, before nine I was seated at the window to watch, all being ready at my hand, the candles extinguished: for the theatre was opened, and the atmosphere of this earth seemed turned into Hell, and Hell was in my soul.

* * *

Immediately after midnight, there was a visible increase in the conflagration, when on all hands I began to see structures soar ablaze, with grand hurrahs, on high, in fives and tens, in twenties and forties: all between me and the limit of my vision they leapt, they lingered, they fell, while my spirit more and more felt—deeper mysteries of sensation, sweeter thrills. I sipped exquisitely, I drew out enjoyment leisurely. Anon when some more expansive angel of flame arose with steady aspiration, to tarry with spread arms, and scatter, I would lift a little to clap, as at acting, or would call to them in the names of woman with "higher, wild Polly," "hop, Cissy, you flea," or "Bertha, burst": for now I seemed to see pandemonium through crimson spectacles, the air wildly hot, and my eyeballs like theirs that walk staring in the midst of burning fiery furnaces, and my skin itched with a rich and prickly itch. Anon I touched the chords of the harp to the air of Wagner's "Walkürenritt."

Near three in the morning I reached the climax of my wicked sweets, my drunken eyelids closing in a luxury of pleasure, and

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my lips lay stretched in a smile that drivelled; a feeling of dear peace, of power without bound, consoled me: for now the whole field at which through streaming tears I peered, mustering its hundred thousand thunders, and brawling beyond the clouds the voice of its southward-bounding torment, wobbled to the horizon one ocean of smokeless fire, in which sported and washed themselves all that dwell in Hell, with callings, flights, and holiday; and I—first of my kind—had flashed a sign to the nigher planets. . . .

* * *

Those words "nigher planets" I wrote thirteen months ago, some days after the destruction of London, I being then on board the old *Boreal,* bound for France: for the night was dark, though calm, and I was frightened of running into some ship, so wrote to do something, the ship lying still; and though the book in which I wrote has been with me, no impulse to scribble has since visited me, until now.

I had no intention of wearing out my life in lighting fires in that island, and came to France with the idea of seeking some palace in the Riviera, Spain, there for the present to make my home: so I set out from Calais toward the end of April, taking my things, by train at first, then, being in no hurry, by motor, maintaining a south direction, ever anew astonished at the luxuriance of the forest vegetation which within so short a space chokes this pleasant land, even before the advent of summer.

After three weeks of slow travelling—for France with her pavered villages, hilly character, forests and country-manner, is always charming to me—after three weeks I happenend upon a valley which had never entered my head, and the moment I saw it I said: "Here I will live," though I had no idea what it was, for the monastery which I saw did not look like a monastery, according to my ideas: but the map shewed that it must be La Chartreuse de Vauclaire in Périgord.

This word "Vauclaire" must be a corruption of *Vallis Clara,* for *l's* and *u's* did interchange about in this way—"fool" and "fou"—which proves the dear laziness of French people, for the "l" was too much trouble for them to sing: at any rate, this Vauclaire, or Valclear, was well named, for here, if anywhere, is Paradise, and, if anyone knew how and where to build and brew liqueurs, it was those old monks, who followed their Master with *entrain* in that Cana miracle, but aesthetically shirked to say to any mountain: "Be thou removed".

* * *

The hue of the vale is cerulean, resembling that blue of the robes of Albertinelli's Madonnas, the monastery itself consisting of an oblong space, or garth, round three sides of which stand sixteen small houses, all identical, cells of the fathers, looking inwards upon cloisters; and in one part of the oblong, under cypress sighings, black crosses over graves.

West is the church, the hostelry, a court with some trees and a fountain; and, beyond, the entrance-gate.

All this on a slope green as grass, backed against a mountain-side of which one does not see the tree-trunks, the trees resembling one leafy tree-top, run out over the breadth of the mountain's breast.

* * *

I was there four months, till something drove me away. What had become of the brothers I do not know, for I only found five, four of whom I took in two journeys in the motor to the church of Saint Martial d'Artenset, and left them there; and the fifth remained three weeks with me, for I would not remove him from his prayer: a brother who knelt in his cell robed and hooded in his phantom white, for like whatever is most phantom, visionary, eerie must a procession of these people have seemed at evening or midnight; he in his pigmy chaste chamber glaring upward at his Christ, who hung long-armed in recess beside three book-shelves; under the Christ a Madonna, gilt-and-blue; the books on the three shelves few, leaning different ways; his elbow on a table at which was a chair; and, behind him, in a corner, the bed—a bed all ennooked in boards: two perpendicular boards at foot and head, reaching the ceiling, a horizontal board at the side over which he got into bed, and another like it above it for fringe, making the bed within a shady den. He was a big severe being, forty, blond as corn, but with red also in his hairy beard; and appalling was the significance of that glare that prayed, and the long-drawn gauntness of those jaundiced jaws. I cannot explain to myself my reverence for this man; but I had it.

It was my way to plant at the portal the carved chair from the chancel on sultry days, and rest my soul, refusing to meditate on anything, drowsing and smok-

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ing for hours: all down there in the plain being woods of fruit waving about the prolonged thread of the river Isle, whose route winds loitering quite nigh the foot of the monastery-slope; this slope dominating the village of Monpont all in thicket, the Isle drawing its waters through the village-meadow, which is dim with shades of oaks: and to have played there a boy, using it familiarly as one's own breathing and foot, must have been pretty sweet and homely.

Well, one morning after four months I opened my eyes in my cell to the piercing consciousness that I had burned Monpont overnight: and so overcome was I with compunction for this poor inoffensive little place, that for two days, scarcely eating, I paced between the oak pews of the nave—massive stalls they are, separated by Corinthian pilasters—wondering what was to become of me, and if I was not already mad; and there are some little angels with strangely human faces, Greuze-like, supporting the nerves of the apse, which, every time I passed them, seemed conscious of me and my existence there; and the woodwork which ornaments the length of the nave, and of the choir also, all an intricacy of marguerites and roses, here and there took in my eyes significant forms from particular points of view; and there is a partition—for the nave is divided into two chapels, one for the brothers and one for the fathers—and in this partition a massive door, which yet looks quite light and graceful, carved with oak and acanthus leaves, and every time I passed through I had the impression that the door was a sentient being, sub-conscious of me; and the Italian-renaissance vault which springs from the nave seemed to look upon me with a gloomy knowledge of me, and of the heart within me: so that in the afternoon of the second day, after pacing the nave for hours, I dropped down at one of the two altars near that door of the screen, entreating God to have pity upon my soul; and in the very midst of my praying, I was up and away, the devil in me; leapt into the motor; nor did I come back to Vauclaire for another month, and came leaving regions of desolation in my rear, cities, furnaces of timber, Bordeaux burned, Lebourne burned, Bergerac burned.

* * *

I returned to Vauclaire, for it seemed now my home; and there I experienced a true, a deep repentance; and I humbled myself before my Maker. In which state I was seated one day in front of the monastery-gate when something said to me: "You will never be a good man, nor permanently escape Hell and frenzy, unless you have an aim in life, devoting yourself heart and soul to some work which will exact all your thought, your ingenuity, your knowledge, your strength of body and will, your skill of head and hand: otherwise you are bound to succumb. Do this, therefore, beginning, not tomorrow, but now: for though no man will see your work, there is still the Almighty God, who is also something in His way: and He will see how you strive, and try, and groan; and perhaps, seeing, may have mercy upon you."

* * *

In this way arose the notion of the palace—a notion, indeed, which had entered my brain before, but merely as a bombastic outcome of my mad moods: now, however, in a very different way, soberly, and, before long, occupying itself with details, difficulties, means, limitations, and every species of practical matter-of-

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fact; and every obstacle which, one by one, I foresaw was, one by one, as days passed, overborne by the ardour with which that notion, soon becoming a mania, possessed me. After nine days of incessant meditation, I decided Yes; and I said: I will build a palace which shall be both a palace and a temple: the first human temple somewhat worth the Potency of Heaven, the only human palace worth the satrap of earth.

* * *

After this decision I remained at Vauclaire another week, a different man from the lounger it had seen, strenuous, converted, humble, making plans of this and of that, of the detail, and of the whole, drawing, multiplying, adding, conics, fluxions, graphs, totting up the period of building, which came out at a little over twelve years, estimating quantities and strength of material, weight and bulk, my nights full of nightmare as to the *kind*, deciding as to the size and structure of the crane, forge, and workshop, and the necessarily-limited weights of their parts, making a catalogue of over 2,400 articles, and finally, up to the fourth week after my departure from Vauclaire, skimming through the topography of almost the whole globe, before fixing upon the island of Imbros for my site.

* * *

I went back to England, and once again to those vacant windows and heaped black streets of what had been London: for its bank-vaults, &c., contained the necessary complement of the gold brought by me from Paris and then stowed in the *Speranza* at Dover, nor had I sufficient familiarity with French industries and methods to ferret out, even with the help of *Bottins*, one half of the 4,000 odd objects which I had now catalogued. My ship was the *Speranza*, being an American yacht, palatially fitted, three-masted, air-driven, with a carrying capacity of 2,000 tons, Tobin-bronzed, in good condition, containing sixteen interacting tanks, with a six-block pulley-system amidships which enables me to lift considerable weights without the aid of the hoisting air-engine, high in the water, sharp, handsome, having-in a few tons only of sand-ballast, and needing when I found her only three days' swotting at the water-line and engines to make her decent and fit: so I tossed out her dead, backed her from the Outer to the Inner Basin to my train on the quay, took in the sixty-three hundred-weight-bags of gold, and the half-ton of amber, and with this alone went to Dover, to Canterbury by motor, and thence by train, with a store of explosives for blasting obstructions, to London, proposing to make Dover my dépôt, and the London rails my thoroughfare from every direction of the country.

But instead of four months, as I had estimated, it kept me ten, a harrowing slavery: I had to blast no less than twenty-five trains from the path of my laden wagons, several times blasting away the metals as well, and then having to travel hundreds of yards without metals: for the labour of kindling the obstructing engines, to shunt them down sidings perhaps distant, was a thing which I would not undertake. However, all's well that ends well, though, if I had it to go through again, no, I should not. The *Speranza* is now lying nine miles off Cape Roca, a mist on the still sea, this being the 19th of June at ten in the night: no wind, no moon; cabin full of mist; and I pretty listless and disappointed, wondering in my soul why I was such a fool as to wallow in all those toils, ten long servile months, my good God, and now gravely thinking of throwing the whole thing to the devil; she pretty deep in the sea, loaded with the palace. When the thirty-three....

* * *

Those words "when the thirty-three" were written over seventeen years since—long years—seventeen in number, nor have I now any notion to what they refer. A book in which I wrote I had lost in the *Speranza* cabin, and yesterday, in coming home to Imbros from an hour's cruise, found it there behind a chest.

I now find considerable difficulty in guiding the pencil, and these lines now written have qiute an odd look, like the handwriting of a man not proficient in the art: it is seventeen years. . . . Nor is the expression of my ideas fluent—have to think for the word, and I should not be surprised if the spelling is queer: I have been thinking inarticulately perhaps all these years; and now the letters have rather a foreign air to me, like Russian; or perhaps it is my fancy: for that I have fancies I know.

But what to write? The history of those seventeen years could not be put down, my good God; at least, it would take seventeen more to do it. If I were to detail the building of the palace alone, and how it killed me nearly, and how I twice fled from it, and had to come back, and became its

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Death seemed indeed to be mistress of the world!

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bounden slave, and dreamt of it, and grovelled before it, and prayed, and raved, and rolled; and how I forgot to make provision in the north wall for the expansion of the gold in summer, and had to break down eight months' work, and how I cursed Thee, how I cursed Thee; and how the lake of wine evaporated faster than the conduits replenished it, and the five voyages which I had to take to Constantinople for loads of wine, and my frothing despairs, till I had the thought of placing the reservoir in the platform to the very bottom, and the prolonged nightmare of terror that I had lest the south side of the palace would undergo subsidence; and how the petrol failed, and of the three weeks' search for petrol along the coast; and how, after list-rubbing all the jet, I found that I had forgotten the rouge for polishing; and how, in the third year, I found the fluate for water-proofing the pores of the platform-stone nearly all leaked away in the *Speranza's* hold, and I had to get silicate of soda at Gallipoli; and how, after two years' observation, I had to come to the conclusion that the lake was leaking, and discovered that this Imbros sand was not suitable for mixing with the skin of Portland cement which covered the cement-concrete, and had to substitute sheet-bitumen in three places; and how I did all, all for the sake of God, thinking "I will work, and be a good man, and cast Hell from me; and when I see it stand finished it will be an Altar and a Testimony to me, and I shall find peace, and be well": and how I have been cheated—seventeen years, long years of my life—for there is no "God"; and how my plasterers' hair failed me, and I had to use flock, hessian, scrym, wadding, whatever I could find, for filling the spaces between the platform cross-walls; and of the espagnolette bolts, how a number of them strangely vanished, as if snatched to Hell by harpies, and I had to make them; and how the crane-chain would not reach two of the silver-panel castings when finished, and they were too heavy for me to lift, and the wringing of the hands of my despair, and my dragging up of the grass, and the transport of my wrath; and how, for all one wild fortnight, I sought in vain for the text-book which describes the ambering process; and how, when all was all but over, in the blasting away of the forge and crane with gun-cotton, a crack appeared down the gold of the east platform-steps, and how I would not be consoled, but mourned and mourned; and how, in spite of all my sorrows, it was divine to watch my power grow from its troglodyte-beginnings of hundredweights, until I could swing tons, squeeze the flowing metals between the mould-end levers and the plungers, build at ease in a travelling-cage, and through sleepless hours view from my hut-door under the moon's electric-light of this land the three piles, of gold stones, of silver panels, of squares of jet and be comforted; and how the putty-wash—but it is over: and not to live over again that vulgar nightmare of means and ends have I taken to this writing again—but to write down something, if I dare.

Seventeen years, my Good God, of that delusion! I could put down no sort of explanation for all those groans and griefs at which a reasoning being would not shriek with derision, for I should have lived at ease in some retreat of the Middle-Orient, and burned my cities: but no, I must be "a good man"—vain notion. Though I do love the house, too, I love it well, for it is my home in the waste.

I had calculated to finish it in twelve years, and I should have finished it in fourteen, but one day, when the south and west platform-steps were already finished—it was in the July of the third year, near sunset—as I left off work, instead of stepping to the tent where my dinner lay ready, I paced down to the ship—strangely—in a daft, mechanical kind of way, without saying a word to myself, a smile of malice on my lips; and at midnight was lying off Mitylene, thirty miles south, having bid, as I thought, a last goodbye to all those toils. I was going to burn Athens.

I did not, however; but kept on my way westward round Cape Matapan, intending to destroy the forests and towns of Sicily, if I found there a suitable motor for travelling, for I had not been at the pains to take the motor on board at Imbros; otherwise I would ravage parts of southern Italy. But when I came thereabouts I was confronted with a horror: for no southern Italy was there, and no Sicily was there, unless a little island five miles long was Sicily, for nothing else I saw, save the crater of Stromboli, smoking still; and, as I cruised northward, looking for land, for a long time I would not credit the evidence of the instruments, thinking that they wilfully misled me, or I stark mad. But no: no Italy was there, until I came to the latitude of Naples, it, too, having vanished, engulfed, engulfed, all that stretch; from which monstrous thing I got so solemn a shock and mood of awe, that the mischievous mind in me was quite chilled and quelled, for it was, and is, my belief that a wide-

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spread re-arrangement of the earth's surface is being purposed, and in all that drama, O my God, how shall *I* be found?

However, I went on my way, but more leisurely, not daring during many days to do anything, lest I might offend anyone; and, in this foolish cowering mood, coasted all the west coast of Spain and France during seven weeks, in that prolonged intensity of calm which at present alternates with storms that transcend all thought, till I came again to Calais: and there, for the first time, landed.

Here I would no more contain myself, but burned; and that stretch of forest between Agincourt and Abbéville, five square miles, I burned; and Abbéville I burned; and Amiens I burned; and three forests between Amiens and Paris I burned; and Paris I burned; burning and burning during four months, leaving in my rear reeking regions, a tract of ravage, like some being of the Pit that blights where his wings of fire pass.

* * *

This of city-burning has now become a habit with me more enchanting—and more debased—than ever was opium to the smoker: my necessary, my brandy, my bacchanal, my secret sin. I have burned Calcutta, Pekin, and San Francisco. . . . In spite of the curbing influence of this building, I have burned and burned—three hundred cities and countrysides. Like Leviathan disporting himself in the sea, so I have rioted in the earth.

* * *

After an absence of six months, I came back to Imbros: for I was for gazing again upon the building that I had done, that I might mock myself for all that unkingly grovelling; but when I saw it standing there as I had abandoned it, frustrate and forlorn, waiting its maker's hand, some pity and instinct to build took me: for something of God was in man; and I dropped prostrate, and spread my arms to God, and was converted, promising to finish the work, with prayers that as I built so He would build my will, and save the last man from the enemy. And I set to work that day to list-rub the last six dalles of the jet.

* * *

I did not leave Imbros after that during four years, except for brief trips to the coast—to Kilid-Bahr, Gallipoli, Lapsaki, Gamos, Erdek, Erekli, once even to Constantinople—if I happened to want anything, or was weary of work, but without once doing the least hurt to anything, containing my humours, and fearing my Maker; and full of peace and charm were those cruises through this Levantic world, which, truly, is rather like a sketch in water-colours done by an angel than like the dun earth; and full of self-satisfaction and pious contentment would I cruise back to Imbros, approved by my conscience, for that I have evaded temptation, and lived tame and stainless.

I had set up the southern of the two closed-lotus columns, and the platform-top was already looking as lovely as heaven, flushing its glory of two-foot squares, pellucid jet alternating with pellucid gold, when I noticed one morning that the *Speranza's* bottom was really now too foul, and the caprice seized me then and there to leave everything, and clean her: so I went on board, descended to the hold, threw off my sudeyrie, and began to shift the ballast over to starboard, to tilt up her port bottom to the scraper: wearying labour, and about noon I was seated on a ballast-bag, resting in the semi-gloom down there, when something seemed to whisper into me: *"You dreamed last night that there is an old Chinaman alive in Pekin."* Horridly I started: I *had* dreamed something of the sort; and I sprang to my feet.

I cleaned no *Speranza* that day; nor for three days did I anything, but sat on the cabin-house brooding, my palm among the hairy draperies of my chin upholding it: for the notion of such a thing, if it could by any possibility be true, was detestable as death to me, changing the colour of the sun and the whole tone of existence; and anon at the outrage of that thing my brow would flush with rage, and my eyes blaze; till in the fourth twilight I said to myself: "That old Chinaman in Pekin is likely to be devoured by fire, I think, or be blown to the clouds."

So a second time, on the 4th of March, the poor palace was left to build itself: for, after a trip to Gallipoli, where I got some lime-twigs in boxes of earth, and some preserved limes and ginger, I set out for a long voyage to the East, passing through the Suez Canal, and visiting Bombay, where I was three weeks, and then destroyed it.

* * *

I had the thought of travelling across

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Hindostan by engine, but did not wish to leave my ship, to which I was attached, not sure of seeing anything so suitable at Calcutta; and, moreover, I was afraid to abandon my motor, which I had taken on board with the air-windlass: I therefore went down the west coast.

All that northern shore of the Arabian Sea has at present an odour which it wafts far over the ocean, resembling odours of happy dreamlands, sweet to smell in the early mornings as if the earth were all a perfume, and heaven an inhalation.

On that voyage, however, I had, from beginning to end, twenty-seven fearful storms, or, if I reckon that one near the Carolines, twenty-eight; but I do not wish to write of these rages: they were too inhuman; and how I came alive through them against my wildest hope Someone, or Something, only knows.

I will put down here a thing; it is this, my God—something that I have noted: a definite obstreperousness in the temperament of the elements now, when once roused, which grows, which grows. Tempests have become very far more wrathful, the sea more truculent and unbounded in its insolence; when it thunders it thunders with rancour new to me, cracking as though it would wreck the welkin's vault, and bawling through the heaven of heavens as if roaring to devour all being; in Bombay once, in China thrice, I was shaken by earthquakes, the second and third marked by a certain extravagance of agitation that might turn a man grey.

Why should this be, my God? I remember being told ages ago that on the American prairies, which of old had been swept by great tempests, the tempests gradually subsided when man went to reside there: so, if this be true, it would seem that the mere presence of man had a certain subduing or mesmerising effect on the innate turbulence of Nature, and his absence today may have taken off the curb. It is my belief that within fifty years the forces of the earth will be turned fully loose to tumble as they choose, and this globe will become one of the undisputed playgrounds of Hell, the theatre of commotions huge as those witnessed on Jupiter.

In coming home from the Orient, I stopped at Ismalia, and so to Cairo, saw where Memphis was, and brooded one midnight before that pyramid and that mute sphynx, seated in a tomb, until tears of pity streamed down my cheeks: for man "passeth away."

A month of that voyage from May the 15th to June the 12th, I squandered at the Andaman Islands near Malay: for that any old Chinaman should be alive in Pekin commenced to appear the queerest whimsey that ever entered a head; and those jungled islands of the sun, to which I had got after a vast orgy one night at Calcutta, when I fired not merely the city but the river, pleased my fancy to such an extent, that at one time I meant to abide there, I being at the one named "Saddle Hill"; and seldom have I had such sensations of peace as I lay a whole day in a valley, deep in the shadow of tropical ranknesses, watching the *Speranza* at anchor: for the valley rose from a bay, of which I could see one peak lined with cocoanut-trees, all cloud scorched out of the sky except the flimsiest lawn-figments, and the sea as still as a lake breathed on by breezes, yet making a considerable noise in its breaking on the coast, as I have noticed in these sorts of places: I do not know why. These Andaman people seem to have been quite savage, for I met some in roaming the island, nearly skeletons, yet with limbs still cohering, and in some cases mummified relics of flesh, and never a shred of clothes: a strange thing, considering their closeness to old civilisations: they looking small and black, or almost, and I never found a man without seeing near him a spear, so that they were keen folk, the earth's perversity spurred in them, too, and I was so pleased with these people, that I took on board with the gig one of their little tree-canoes: which was my foolishness: for gig and canoe were three days later smitten from the decks into the middle of the sea.

* * *

I passed down the Straits of Malacca, and in that short distance between the Andaman Islands and the S. W. corner of Borneo I was thrice so mauled, that at times it seemed out of the question that anything built by man could outlive such cataclysms; and I abandoned myself, but with bitter reproaches, to perish darkly, the effect of the last on me, when it was over, being the unloosening anew of my tumid moods: for I said "Since they mean to slay me, death shall find me rebellious": and for weeks I did not sight some specially blessed village, or umbrageous spread of timber, that I did not stop the ship, and land the materials for their destruction: so that nearly all those odorous lands about the north of Australia will bear the traces of my hand for many a year: for more and more my voyage grew loitering and zig-

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zagged, as some whim shunted it, or a movement of the pointer of the chart; and I thought of chewing the lotus of sloth and nepenthe, enchanted in some pensive nook of this summer, where from my hut-door I should see through the opal hues of opium the sea-lagoon gush sluggishly upon the coral atol, and the cocoanut-tree would droop like slumber, and the breadfruit-tree would mumble in dream, and I should watch the *Speranza* at anchor in the pallid atol-lake, year after year, and wonder what she was, and whence, and wherefore she dozed so deep for ever; and after an age of melancholy peace I should note that sun and moon had ceased to move, and hung spent, opening anon an eyelid to doze again, and God would sigh "Enough," and nod: for that any old Chinaman should be alive in Pekin was a thing so fantastically maniac, as to cast me at times into paroxysms of wild red laughter that left me faint.

During four months, from June into October, I visited the Fijis, where I saw heads still englobed in thickets of stiff hair; in Samoa skulls coroneted with nautilus-shell, and in one townlet an assemblage of bodies suggesting some festival: so that I believe that these people perished on a day of woe and overthrow without the least presage of anything. The women of Maoris wore an abuandance of jade embellishment, and I found a peculiar kind of shell-trumpet, one of which I have now, with a tattooing chisel and a wooden bowl nicely carved; while the New Caledonians wore apparently an artificial hair made of the fur of some animal like a bat, and they wore wooden masks, and big rings—for the ear, no doubt—which must have reached down to the shoulders: for the earth urged them every one, and made them wild, wayward and various like herself. I went from one to the other without any system whatever, seeking the ideal resting-place, and frequently thinking that I had found it, only to weary of it at the feeling that there might be a yet deeper and dreamier in-being; but in this seeking I received a check, my God, which chilled me to the liver, and set me fleeing from these places.

* * *

One night, the 29th of November, I dined late—at eight—sitting, as was my way in calm weather, cross-legged on the cabin-rug in the starboard aft corner, a semicircle of *Speranza* gold-plate before me, and near above me the lamp's red glow and green conical reservoir, whose creakings never cease in the stilliest mid-sea; and beyond the plates the array of soups, meat-extracts, meats, fruit, sweets, wines, nuts, liqueurs, coffee on the silver spirit-tripod—all which it was always my care to select from the store-room and lay out once for all in the morning. I was late, seven being my hour, for on that day I had been engaged in the job, always postponed, of overhauling the ship, brushing here a rope with tar, there a board with paint, there a crank with oil, rubbing a door-handle, a brass-fitting, filling the three cabin-lamps, dusting mirrors, dashing the plains of deck with bucketfulls, and, up aloft, chopping loose with its rigging the mizzen topmast, which for a month had been sprained at the clamps: all this in cotton drawers under my *quamis*, barefooted, my beard knotted up, the sun ablaze, the sea smooth and pallid with that smooth pallor of currents in a hurry, the ship pretty still, no land near, yet large tracts of sea-weed reaching away eastward—I at it from 11 until 7, when sudden darkness interrupted: for I wanted to have it all over in one offensive day:

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so I was pretty weary when I went down, lit the central lever-lamp and my own two, dressed in my room, then to dinner in the saloon; and voraciously I ate, perspiration, as usual, pouring down my brow, using knife or spoon in the right hand, but never the Western fork, licking the plates clean in the Mohammedan manner, drinking pretty freely.

Still I was weary and went on deck where I had the easy-chair with the broken arm, its blue-velvet threadbare now, before the wheel; and in it I lay, smoking cigar after cigar from the Indian D box, half-asleep, yet conscious, while the moon moved up into a sky nearly cloudless: and she was bright, but not bright enough to outshine that enlightened flight of the ocean, which that night was one swamp of phosphorescence, a wild luminosity of jack-o'-lantern, thronged with stars and flashes—the whole trooping unanimously, as if in haste with some momentous purpose, an interminable assemblage teeming, careering eastward in the sweep of an urgent current.

I could hear it in my sluggard slumbrousness struggling at the bound rudder, gulping sloppy noises of hogs' chops guttling beneath the sheer of the poop; and I knew that the ship was slipping along pretty quickly, drawn into the trend of that procession, probably at the rate of six knots; but I did not care, knowing very well that no land was within two hundred miles of my bows, for I was in long. 173°, in the latitude of Fiji and the Society Islands, between those two; and after a time the cigar drooped from my mouth, drowisness overcame me, and I slept there, in the lamp of immensity.

* * *

So that something preserves me: Something, Someone: *and for what?* . . . If I had slept in the cabin, I must most certainly have perished: for, stretched there on the chair, I dreamed a dream which once I had dreamed in the snows yonder in the beyond of that hyperborean North: that I was in an Arab paradise; and I had a protracted vision of it, for I reached up amid the trees, and picked the peaches, and pressed the blossoms to my nostrils with breathless inhalations of fondness: until a sickness woke me, and when I opened my eyes the night was gloomy, the moon down, everything drenched with dew, the sky a jungle lush with stars, bazaar of maharajahs tiaraed, begums arrayed in garish trains, and all the air informed with that mortal afflatus; and high and wide uplifted before my sight—stretching from the northern to the southern limit—a row of eight or nine smokes, inflamed as from the chimneys of some Cyclopean forge which goes all night, most solemn, most great and dreadful in the solemn night: eight or nine, I should say, or it may be seven, or it may be ten, for I did not reckon them; and from those craters puffed up gusts of encrimsoned stuff, there a gust and there a gust, with tinselled fumes that convolved upon themselves, glittering with troops of sparks and flashes, all in a garish haze of glare: for the foundry was going, though languidly: and upon a land of rock four knots ahead, which no chart had ever marked, the *Speranza* drove straight with the sweep of the phosphorus sea.

As I rose, I fell flat: and what I did thereafter I did in a state of existence whose acts, to the waking intellect, seemed unreal as dream. I must immediately, I think, have been conscious that here was the cause of the destruction of organisms, conscious that it still surrounded its own neighbourhood with baneful emanations, conscious that I was approaching it: and I must have somehow crawled or won myself forward. I have a certain sort of impression that it was a purple land of pure porphyry; there is some faint memory, or dream, of hearing a long-drawn rumour of breakers booming upon its rock: I do not know how I have them. I certainly remember retching with desperate jerks of my travailing entrails, remember that I was on my back when I moved the adjustor in the engine-room: but any recollection of going down the stairs, or of coming up again, I have not. Happily, the rudder being fixed hard to starboard, the ship, as she forged ahead, must have swung about; and I must have been back up to free the wheel in time, for when my senses came again I was lying there, my head against a gimbal, one heel stuck up on a spoke of the wheel, no land in sight, and the sun shining.

This made me so sick, that for either two or three days I lay without eating in the seat near the wheel, only waking occasionally to sufficient sense to see to it that she was making westward from that place; and on the morning when I came well to myself I was not certain whether it was the second or the third morning: so that my calendar, so exactly kept, may now be a day out, for to this day I have never been at the pains to ascertain if I

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am here spelling on the 10th or the 11th of May.

* * *

Well, on the fifth evening after this, as the sun was sinking at the rim of the sea, I happened to look where he hung on the starboard bow: and there I saw a black-green spot clean-cut against his red—a very unusual object here and now—a ship: a poor thing, as she proved when I got nigh to her, without any sign of mast, all-water-logged, some relics of rigging straggling over her beams, even her bowsprit broken at the middle, she nothing but one bush of weeds and sea-things from bowsprit-tip to poop-edge, stout as a hedgehog, awaiting there the next pounding of the sea to founder.

It being near my dinner-hour, I stopped the *Speranza* about sixty feet from her; and, in pacing my spacious poop, as usual before eating, kept giving glances at her, wondering who were the sons of men that had lived on her, their names, and minds, and way of life, and faces, until the desire arose within me to go to her and see: so I threw off my outer robes, uncovered and unroped the cedar cutter—the only boat, except the air-pinnace, then left to me whole—and lowered her by the mizzen pulley-system.

But it was a ridiculous nonsense, for when I had paddled to the derelict it was only to be thrown into paroxysms of rage by repeated failures to scale her bulwarks, low as they were: for though my hands could easly reach, I could find no hold on the slimy mass, and three rope-ends which I seized were also untenably slippery, so that I collapsed always back into the boat, my clothes a mass of filth, and the only thought in my blazing brain a twenty-pound charge of guncotton, of which I had plenty, to blast her to uttermost Hell. In the end I had to go back to the *Speranza,* get a rope, then back to the other, for I would not be challenged in such a way, though now the dark was come, hardly tempered by a far half-moon, and I getting hungry, and from minute to minute more devilishly ferocious; until, by dint of throwing, I managed to slip the rope-loop round a mast-stump and drew myself up, my left hand slashed by some hellish shell: and for what? the imperiousness of a caprice. The shadowy moonshine shewed an ample tract of deck, mostly invisible beneath rolls of putrid seaweed, and no bodies, nothing but a concave esplanade of seaweed, she a ship of probably 3,000 tons, three-masted, a sailer.

When I moved aft, having no thick babooshes, I could see that only four of the companion-steps remained; but by a leap I was able to descend into that desolation, where the stale sea-stench seemed concentrated into the very essence of rawness, and here I got a ghostly awe and timorousness, lest she should go down with me, or something; but, on flashing matches, I saw an ordinary cabin, with some fungoids, skulls, bones, rags, but not one connected skeleton; in the second starboard berth a table, and on the floor an ink-pot whose continual rolling made me look down: and there I observed a scribbling-book with black covers which curved half-open, for it had been wet.

This book I took, and paddled back to the *Speranza*: for that ship was nothing but an emptiness, and a stench of the crude elements of existence, nearly assimilated already to the rank deep to which she was wedded, soon to be sucked back into its nature and being, to become a sea-in-little, as I, in time, my God, am to be turned into an earth-in-little.

During dinner, and after, I read the book—with some difficulty, for it was pen-written in French, and discoloured; and it turned out to be the journal of someone, a passenger and voyager, I imagine, who called himself Albert Tissu, and the ship the *Marie Meyer*: nothing remarkable in the narrative—descriptions of South Sea scenes, records of weather, cargoes—until I came to the last page, which was remarkable enough, that page being dated the 12th of April—strange thing, my good God, that same day, twenty years ago, when I reached the Pole; and the writing on that page was quite different from the spruce look of the rest, proving high excitement, wildest haste, headed *"Cinq Heures, P.M.,"* and he writes: "Monstrous event! phenomenon without likeness! the witnesses of which must live immortalised in the annals of the universe, so that Mama and Juliette will now confess that I was justified in undertaking this voyage.

"Conversing with Captain Tombarel on the stern, when a murmur from him—*'Mon Dieu!'* His visage blanches! I follow the direction of his gaze to eastward—I behold! seven kilomètres perhaps away, *ten waterspouts,* reaching up, up, high, all in line, with intervals of nine hundred mètres, very regularly placed; but they do not wander nor waver, as waterspouts do, nor are they at all lily-shaped, like waterspouts—just pillars of water, a little

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twisted here and there, and, as I conjecture, fifty mètres in diameter. And six minutes we look, while Captain Tombarel repeats and repeats under his breath *'Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!,'* the whole crew now on deck, I agitated, yet collected, watch in hand; until suddenly all is blotted out; the pillars, doubtless still there, can no more be seen: for the ocean about them is steaming, hissing higher still than the pillars, a vapour, immense in extent, whose sibilation we can hear.

"It is affrighting! it is intolerable! the eyes can hardly bear to watch, the ears to hear! it seems unearthly travail, monstrous birth! But it lasts not long: all at once the *Marie Meyer* commences to pitch and roll, for the sea, a moment since still, is now rough! and at the same time, through the white vapour, we descry a shade rising, a shade, a mighty back, a new-born land, bearing skyward ten flames of fire, slowly, steadily, out of the sea, into the clouds. At the moment when that sublime emergence ceases, or seems to cease, the thought that smites me is this: 'I, Albert Tissu, am immortalized': I rush down, I write it. The latitude is 16° 21′ 13″ South; the longtitude 176° 58′ 19″ West[1]. There is a running about on the decks—an odour like almonds—it is so dark, I—"

So this Albert Tissu.

* * *

With all that region I would have no more to do: for all here, it used to be said, lies a sunken continent, and I thought that it would be rising and shewing itself to my eyes, and driving me rushing-frenzied: for the earth is turbid with these contortions, monstrous grimaces, apparitions that are like the Gorgon's face, appalling man into spinning stone; and nothing could be more appallingly insecure than living on a planet.

Nor did I stop until I had got so far north as the Philippines, where I was two weeks—exuberant, odorous places, but so steep and rude, that at one place I abandoned all attempt at travelling in the motor, and left it in a valley by a broad, noisy river, thick with mossy rocks: for I said "Here I will live, and be at peace"; and then I had a scare, seeing that during three days I could not discover the river and the motor, and I was in the greatest despair, thinking "When shall I find my way out of these jungles and vastnesses?", for I was where no paths are, and had lost myself in depths of verdure where the lure of the earth is too strong and rank for a solitary man, since in such places, I assume, a man would rapidly be transmuted into a tree, or a snake, or a cat.

At last, however, I refound the spot, to my great joy, but would not shew that I was glad, and, to conceal it, attacked a wheel of the motor with some kicks. . . . But those two years of roaming, they are over, and like a dream; and not to write of that—of all that—have I taken this pencil in hand after seventeen long, long years.

* * *

Singular—my reluctance to put it on paper. . . .

I will write of the voyage to China, how I landed the car on the wharf at Tientsin, and passed up, nigh the river, to Pekin through a maize and rice land which was charming in spite of cold. I thick with clothes like an Arctic traveller; and of three earthquakes within two weeks; and how the only map which I had of the city gave no indication of the whereabouts of its military stores, and I had to seek them; and of the three days' effort to enter to them, every gate grim and riveted against me, and how I burned, but had to observe the flames from beyond the city-walls, the place being all one cursed plain; yet how I cried aloud with wild banterings and challenges of Tophet to that old Chinaman still alive within it; and how I coasted, and made acquaintance with the hairy Ainus, male and female hairy alike; and how, lying one midnight sleepless in my cabin, the *Speranza* being in a still glassy harbour beneath a cliff overgrown by drooping greenery—the harbour of Chemulpo—to me lying awake came the notion, "Suppose now you should hear a foot pacing to and fro, patiently, on the poop above—*suppose*"; and the night of terrors that rived me: for I could not help supposing, and at one time really seemed to hear it, and how sweat poured from my every pore; and how I went to Nagasaki, and destroyed it; and how I crossed that Pacific deep to San Francisco, for I knew that Chinamen had been there, too, and one might be alive; and how, one still day, the 15th or the 16th of April, I, seated by the wheel in the mid-Pacific, suddenly noted a wild white hole that ran and wheeled, and wheeled and ran, within the sea, reeling toward me; and I was aware of the hot whiff of a wind, then of the hot wind itself, which wheeled, deep-vent-

Note 1 French reckoning apparently, from Meridian of Paris.

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ing a vehemence of the letter V, humming hymn of hosts of spinning-tops, and the *Speranza* was on her beam, sea pouring over her port-bulwarks, myself down on the deck against the taffrail, drowning fast, pegged there; but all was soon over, and the hole within the sea, and the hot spinning-top of wind, ran reeling on to the horizon, and the *Speranza* righted herself; so that it was evident that someone wished to do for me, for that a typhoon of such vehemence ever blew before I do not think; and how I arrived at San Francisco, and fired it, and had my delights: for it was mine.

And how, then, as I moved round west anew, another winter come, I now lost in a mood of dismal despondencies, on the very brink of the inane abysm and smiling idiotcy, I saw in the island of Java that temple of Boro Budor: and like a tornado, or volcanic event, my soul was changed: for my studies in the architecture of man before I started on the palace came back to me with zest, and for five nights I slept in the temple, examining it by day. It is vast, having that aspect of massiveness which characterises Mongol building, my measurement of its breadth being 529 feet, and it rises in six terraces, each divided up into innumerable niches, containing each a statue of the seated Boodh, with a voluptuousness of tracery that is drunkening, all surmounted by a crowd of cupolas, and crowned by a great dagop: and when I saw this, I had a longing to be back at my home after so prolonged roaming, and to set up the temple of temples; and I said: "I will go back, and build it as a witness to God."

* * *

Save for some days in Egypt, I did not once stop on that homeward voyage, moving into the little harbour at Imbros on a calm sundown on the 7th of March (as I reckon): and I moored the *Speranza* to the ring in the little quay.

For two days I would do nothing, just lounging and watching, shirking a load so huge; but on the third morning I languidly began something: and I had not worked an hour when a fervour took me—to finish it, to finish it—and this did not leave me, with but three brief intervals, for nearly seven years; nor would the end have been so long in coming, but for the unexpected difficulty in getting the four flat roofs water-tight, I having to take down half the west one. Finally I made them of gold slabs 1¼ inch thick, on each beam double-gutters being fixed along each side of the top flange to catch any leakage at the joints, which are filled with slater's cement, the slabs being clamped to the top flanges by steel clips.

But now I babble again of that slavery, which I would forget, but cannot: for every measurement, bolt, ring, is in my brain, like an obsession; but it is past—and it was vanity.

* * *

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six months more protracted, desolate, burdened, than all those sixteen years in which I built.

I wonder what a man—some Shah, or Tsar, of that far-off past—would say now of me, if an eye could light on me? He'd shrink, I think—yes, undoubtedly—before the majesty of these eyes; and though I am not lunatic—for I am not, I am not—no doubt he'd fly from me, crying out "Here is the lunacy of Pride!"

For there would seem to him—I believe so—in myself, in all about me, somewhat of royal beyond bounds, fraught with terror. My body has fattened, my girth now filling out to a portly roundness its band or girdle of crimson cloth a foot broad, Babylonish, gold-embroidered, hung with a hundred copper and gold coins of the Orient; my beard, still ink-black, sweeps in two sheaves to my hips, flustered by each wind; as I pace the chambers of this palace, the floor of amber-and-silver blushes in its depths, reflecting the low neck and short arm of my robe of blue and scarlet, abloom with luminous stones. I am ten times Satrap and Emperor, seated a hundred times enthroned in established obese old majesty: challenge me who dare! Among those lights that I nightly pore upon may fly songsters, my peers and fellow-denizens, but *here* I am sole; earth bows her brow before my purples and hereditary sceptre: for though she entices me, not yet am I hers, but she is mine. It seems to me not less than a million aeons since other beings, more or less resembling me, stepped impudently in the open sunlight of this planet; I can in fact no longer picture myself, nor properly credit, that such a state of things—so fantastic, far-fetched, droll—could have existed: though, at bottom, I suppose, I know that it must have been so; indeed, up to ten years ago I used to *dream* that there were others, would see them go about the streets like ghosts, and be troubled, and bound awake; but never now could such a thing, I think, occur to me in sleep: for the wildness of the circumstances would certainly strike my mind, and immediately I should descry that the dream was a dream. For now at least I am sole, I am lord. The walls of this palace which I have piled stare down ravished at their reflection in the fire of a lake of wine.

Not that I made it of wine because wine is rare, nor the walls of gold because gold is rare, since I am not a goose: but because, having determined to match for beauty a human work with the work of those Others, I had in mind that, by some prank of the earth, precisely the objects most costly are usually the most beautiful.

The vision of splendour and loveliness which is this palace now risen before my eyes cannot be described by pen on paper, though there *may* be words in the lexicons of mankind which, if I searched for them with inspired wit for sixteen years, as I have built for sixteen years, might as vividly express my mind to a mind as the stones-of-gold, so grouped, express it to the eye: but, failing such labours and skill, I suppose I could not give, if there lived another man, and I sought to give, the smallest conception of its celestial charm.

It is a structure not less clear than the sun, nor fair than the moon—the sole structure in the making of which no restraining thought of cost has played a part, one of its steps being of more cost than all the temples, mosques and besestins, the palaces, pagodas and cathedrals, reared between the eras of the Nimrods and the Napoleons.

The house itself is quite small—40 ft. long, by 35 broad, by 27 high: yet the structure as a whole is pretty enormous, high uplifted, because of the platform on which the house stands, its base 480 ft. square, its height 130 ft., its top 48 ft. square, the elevation 22½ degrees, the top reached on each edge by 183 steps, low, gold-plated—not a continuous flight, but broken into threes, fives, sixes, nines, with landings between, these from the top looking like a great terraced parterre of gold: the palace is thus Assyrian in plan, except that the platform has steps every-way, instead of one set, the platform-top round the house being a mosaic of squares of the glassiest gold and of the glassiest jet, corner to corner, each square 2-ft., round the platform running 48 gold pilasters, 2 ft. high, square, tapering upwards, topped by knobs, the knobs connected by silver chains, from the chains hanging hosts of silver globes that gabble together in a breeze.

The house itself consists of an outer court (facing east toward the sea) and the house proper built round an inner court, the outer court being an oblong as broad as the house, its three walls of gold, battlemented, lower than the house, round their top running a band of silver 1 ft. wide; and at the gate, which is Egyptian, narrower at top, stand the two pillars of gold, square, tapering upwards, 45 ft. high, with their capital of band, closed-lotus, and plinth. In the outer court is the well, re-

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producing in little the shape of the court, its sides gold-lined, tapering downwards to the bottom of the platform, where a conduit replenishes the mean evaporation of the lake—automatically on the principle of carburetor-floats—the well containing 105,360 litres, and the lake occupying a circle round the platform of 980 ft. diameter, with a depth of 3½ ft.

Round the well, too, run pilasters connected by silver chains, and it communicates by a conduit with a pool of wine sunk into the center court, the pool being fed from eight gold tanks, tall and narrow, tapering upwards, which surround it, each containing a different red wine, sufficient to last my lifetime.

The ground of the outer court, as well as the platform-top, is a mosaic of jet and gold, but thenceforth the squares consist of silver and amber, amber limpid as slabs of solid oil, the entrance to the inner court being by an Egyptian doorway with folding-doors of cedar, gold-plated, surrounded by a coping of silver, huge, thick, 3½ ft. wide, simplicity of line everywhere heightening the effect of richness of material.

The rest resembles rather a Homeric than an Assyrian house (except for the "galleries," which are Babylonish and Old Hebrew), the inner court with its wine-pool and tanks being an oblong 8 ft. by 9 ft. upon which open four silver-latticed windows, oblongs in the same proportion, and two doors, oblongs in the same proportion, round this court running the eight walls of the house proper, the four inner being 10 ft. from the four outer, each parallel two forming one long chamber, except the front (east) two, which are split up into three rooms.

In each room are four panels of silver, thinner than their rims, in the sunken space being paintings, of which 21 were taken at the burning of Paris from a place named "The Louvre," and 3 from a place in London, the panels having the look of great frames, and are surrounded by garlands of opal, garnet, topaz, each garland being an oval, a foot wide at the side, narrowing to an inch at top and bottom.

As to the "galleries," they are four recesses in the four outer walls under the roofs, hung with rose and white silks on gold pilasters, each gallery entered by four steps down from its roof, to the roofs leading two corkscrew stairs of cedar, east and north, on the east roof being the kiosk with the telescope: and from that height, and from the galleries, I can watch under the moonlight of this climate, which is not unlike limelight, those mountains of Macedonia silent forever, where the islands of Samothraki, Lemnos, Tenedos sleep like purplish birds of fable on the Aegean Sea: for, usually, I sleep during the daytime and keep a night long vigil, frequently at midnight descending to be taking my scarlet baths in the lake, to disport myself in that intoxication of nose, eyes, pores, dreaming long wide-eyed dreams at the bottom, to come back up doddering, weak, drunken.

Or again—*twice* within these idle void months—I have rushed, calling out, from these halls of luxury, snatching off my gorgeous rags, to skulk in a hut on the shore, smitten in those moments with a vision of the past and vastness of this planet, and moaning "alone, alone . . . all alone, alone, alone . . . alone, alone. . . ." For events resembling eruptions take place in my brain, and one flushed 'foreday—how flushed!—I may kneel on the roof with streaming cheeks, my arms cast out, with awe-struck heart adoring, the next I may strut like a cock, wanton as sin, lusting to blow up a city, to wallow in filth, and, like the Babylonian maniac, naming myself the mate of Heaven.

* * *

But it was not to write of this—of all this. . . .

Of the furnishings of the palace I have written nothing. . . . But why hesitate to admit to myself what I *know*. . . . If They speak to me, I may speak of Them: for I do not fear Them, but am Their peer. . . .

Of the island I have written nothing: its size, climate, form, flora. . . . There are two winds: a north and a south; the north is cool, the south is warm; and the south blows during the winter months, so that sometimes at Christmas it is hot; and the north blows from May to September, so that the summer is seldom oppressive, and the climate was made for a king. The mangal-stove in the south hall I have never once lit.

The length is 19 miles, the breadth 10, and the highest mountains must be 2,000 ft., though I have not been all over it. It is densely wooded, and I have seen growths of wheat and barley, obviously degenerate now, with currants, figs, valonia, tobacco, vines in rank abundance, and two marble quarries. From the palace, which stands on a sunny plateau of swards, dotted with the shades thrown by fourteen huge cedars and eight planes, I can see all around an edge of forest, with the

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sheen of a lake to the north, and in the hollow to the east the rivulet with its bridge; and I can spy right through—

* * *

It shall be written now:

I have this day heard within me the contention of the voices.

* * *

I had thought that they were done with me! That all, all, all, was ended! I have not heard them for twenty years!

But to-day—distinctly—breaking in with brawling suddenness upon my consciousness . . . I heard.

This *far niente* and vacuous inaction here has been undermining my mind, this brooding upon the earth, this empty life, and bursting brain! So immediately after eating at noon to-day, I said to myself "I have been duped by the palace: for I have spent myself in building, hoping for peace, and there is no peace; therefore now I will flee from it to another, sweeter work—not of building, but of burning—not of Heaven, but of Hell—not of self-denial, but of reddest revel: Constantinople—beware!"; and, throwing a plate away, with a stamp I was up: but, as I stood—again, again—I heard: the startling wrangle, the vulgar rough outbreak and voluble controversy, till my consciousness could not hear its ears; and one urged: "Go! go!" and the other: "Not there! . . . where you like . . . not there . . . for your life!"

I did not—for I could not—go, I was so overcome; dropped shuddering upon the couch.

These voices, or impulses, strongly as I was conscious of them of old, quarrel within me now with an openness new to them. Lately, influenced by my scientific habit, I have asked myself whether what I used to call "the Voices" were not in truth two intuitive movements such as most men may have felt, though with less force. But to-day doubt is past, doubt is past: nor, unless I be mad, can I ever more doubt.

* * *

I have been thinking, thinking, of my life: there is a something which I cannot understand.

There was a man whom I met in that dark backward and abysm of time—at the college in England it was—his name far enough now beyond the grasp of my memory, lost in the limbo of past things; but he used to talk about certain "Black" and "White" Powers, and of their strife for this world—short man with a Roman nose, who lived in fear of growing a paunch, his forehead in profile more prominent at top than at bottom, his hair parted in the middle, and he had the theory that the male form was more beautiful than the female—I forgot what his name was, the dim clear-obscure being, one of those untrained brains that accepted fancies and ascertained facts with equal belief, as men in general did: yet deep was the effect of his thesis upon me, though I think I often made a point of mocking him. This man always declared that "the Black" would carry off the victory in the end: and so he has, old "Black."

But, assuming the existence of this "Black" and this "White" being—and supposing it to be a fact that my reaching the Pole had any connection with the destruction of species—then, it must have been the potency of *"the Black"* which carried me, over all obstacles, to the Pole. So far I can understand.

But *after* I had reached the Pole, what further use had either White or Black for me? Which was it—White or Black—that preserved my life through my protracted return on the ice—and why? It *could* not have been "the Black"! For *from* the moment when I stood at the Pole, the only purpose of the Black, which had formerly preserved, must have been to destroy, me with the others. It must have been *"the White,"* then, that led me back, retarding me long, so that I should not enter the poison-cloud, and then openly presenting me the *Boreal* to bring me home to Europe. But his motive? And the significance of these fresh wrangles, after such a stillness? This I do not understand!

Damn Them and their tangles! I care nothing for Them!—if they were there. For are not these outcries that I hear nothing but the screams of my own burning nerves, and I all mad and morbid, morbid and mad, mad, my good God?

This inertia here is *not good* for me! This stalking about the palace! and long thinkings about Earth and Heaven, Black and White, White and Black, and things beyond the stars! My brain is like bursting through the walls of my poor head.

Tomorrow, then, to Constantinople. . . .

* * *

I came down to the *Speranza* with the

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motor, went through her, spent the day in work, slept on her, worked again today until four at both ship and time-fuses (I with only 700 fuses left, and in Stamboul alone must be 8,000 houses, without counting Galata, Tophana, Kassim-pacha), started out at 5:30, and am now at 11 lying two miles off the island of Marmora, with moonlight musings on the sea, which a breeze brindles, the little land seeming immensely stretched-out, grave and great, as if it were the globe, and there were nothing more, and the tiny island at its end immense, and the *Speranza* vast, and I alone puny. Tomorrow morning I will moor the *Speranza* in the Golden Horn at that hill where the palace of the Capitan Pacha is. . . .

I found that tangle of craft in the Golden Horn wonderfully preserved, with hardly any moss-growths, owing, I suppose, to the little Ali-Bey, which, flowing into the Horn at the top, makes a constant current.

Ah, I remember the place: long ago I lived here—the fairest of cities—and the greatest, for, though I think that London in England was bigger, no city, surely, ever *seemed* so big. But it is flimsy, and will burn like tinder, the houses built light, of timber, with interstices filled by earth and bricks, some looking ruinous already, with their lovely tints of green and gold and pink and azure and daffodil, faint like tints of flowers withering: for it is a city of paints and trees, and all about the little winding streets, as I write, are volatile armies of almond-blossoms, laughing in a mêlée with maple-blossoms, white whirled with purple.

Even the most sumptuous of the Sultan's palaces are built in this combustible manner, for I believe that they had a notion that stone-building was presumptuous, though I have seen some stone-houses in Galata; indeed, the place lived in a state of sensation at nightly flares-up, and I have come across several tracts already devastated by fires. The ministers-of-state used to attend them, and, if the fire would not go out, the Sultan himself would drive up, to egg-on and incite the firemen. Now it will burn still better.

But I have been here six weeks, and still no burning: for the place seems to plead with me, it is so fair, and I do not know why I did not live here, and spare my toils all those sixteen years of nightmare: so that for three weeks the impulse to fire was quieted, and since then an irritating whisper has been at my ear which says: "It is not really like the Shah you are, this firing, rather like a child, or a savage, who like to see fireworks; at least if you must burn, do not burn poor Constantinople, which is so charming, and so old, with its balsamic perfumes, and the blossomy trees of white and light-purple peering over the walls of the cloistered houses, and all those lichened tombs—menhirs and regions of marble tombs between the quarters, Greek tombs, Byzantine, Mussulman tombs, with their strange and sacred inscriptions, overwaved by their cypress sighing, and their plane-trees"; and for weeks I would do nothing, but roamed about with two minds in me under the sultriness of the sky by day, and the mighty trance of the nights of this place, that are like nights gazed at through azure glasses, and in one of them is not one night, but the thousand-and-one crowded nightlongs of glamour and phantasm: for I would sit on that esplanade of the Seraskierat, or those tremendous stones of the porch of the mosque of Mehmedfatih, dominating from its steps all Stamboul, and pore upon the moon for hours and hours, so passionately rapt she soared through cloud and cloudless, until I would be smitten with doubt of my identity: for whether I were she, or the earth, or myself, of some other thing or person, I did not know, all so silent alike, and all, except myself, so vast, the Seraskierat, and Stamboul, and the Marmora Sea, and Europe, and those argent fields of the moon, all large alike compared with me, and measure and space were lost, and I with them.

* * *

These proud Turks died stolidly, many of them: in streets of Kassim-pacha, in crowded Taxim on the heights of Pera, and under the arcades of Sultan-Selim, I have seen the open-air barber's razor with his bones, and with him the skull of the faithful half-shaved, and the two-hours' narghile with traces of tembaki and haschish still in the bowl. Ashes now are they, and dry yellow bone; but in the houses of Phanar, in noisy old Galata, the black shoe and head-dress of the Greek is still distinguishable from the Hebrew blue: for it was a ritual of colours here in boot and hat—yellow for Mussulman, red boot, black calpac for Armenian, for the Effendi a white turban, for the Greek a black, while the Tartar skull shines from under a high calpac, the Nizaindjid's from a melon-shaped head-piece, the Imam's

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and Dervish's from a conical felt, and here and there a "Frank" in European rags; and I have seen the towering turban of the bashi-bazouk, and some softas in those domes on the wall of Stamboul, and the beggar, and the street-merchant with his tray of watermelons, sweetmeats, raisins, sherbet, and the bear-shewer, and the Barbary organ, and the night-watchman, who evermore cried "Fire!" with his lantern, pistols, dirk, and wooden javelin; I have gone out to those plains beyond the walls whence the city looks nothing but minarets shooting through cypress-tops, and I seemed to see the muezzin at some summit, crying *"Mohammed Resoul Allah!"* —the wild man; and from the cemetery of Scutari the walled city of Stamboul lay spread entire before me up to Phanar and Eyoub in their cypress-woods, the whole embowered now, one mass of alleys darkened by balconies of old Byzantine houses, beneath which one on mule-back had to stoop the head—alleys where even old Stamboulers would lose their way in intricacies of the picturesque; and within the boscage of the Bosphorous coast, to Foundoucli and beyond, some peeping yali, snow-white palace, or Armenian cot; and the Seraglio by the sea, a town within a town; and southward the sea of Marmora, blue-and-white, and vast, wriggling vigorous like a sea just born and rejoicing at its birth under the sun, all brisk, alert, to the islands like sighs afar: and, as I looked, I suddenly said a wild, mad thing, my God, a wild and maniac thing, a screaming maniac thing for Hell to scream at: for something said with my tongue: *"This city is not quite dead."*

* * *

Five nights I slept in Stamboul itself at the palace of some sanjakbey or emir, or rather dozed, with one slumbrous lid that would open to note my visitors Sinbad, and Ali Baba, and old Haroun, to note how they slumbered and dozed: for it was in the small chamber where the bey received those speechless all-night visits of the Turks, rosy hours of perfumed romance, and drunkenness of the fancy, and visionary languor, sinking toward sunrise into the still deeper peace of sleep; and there, still were the *yatags* for the guest to sit cross-legged on for the waking mooning, and to drop upon for the morning swoon, and the copper brazier still scenting of essence-of-rose, and the cushions, rugs, hangings, the monsters on the wall, the haschisch-chibouques, hookahs, narghiles, and drugged pale cigarettes, and a secret-looking lattice outside the doorway, painted with trees and peacocks; and the air narcotic and grey with the incense of pastilles and the scented smokes that I had smoked; and I all drugged and mumbling, my left eye suspicious of Ali there, and Sinbad, and old Haroun, who dozed.

And when I had slept, and rose to bathe in a room close to the latticed balcony of the facade, before me lay Galata in sunshine, and that great avenue mounting to Pera, once crowded at every nightfall with divans on which grave dervishes smoked narghiles, and there was no room to pass, for all was divans, lounges, almond-trees, heaven-high hum, chibouques in forests, the dervish, and the innumerable porter, the horse-hirer with his horse from Tophana, and arsenal-men from Kassim, and traders from Galata, and artillery-workmen from Tophana; and at the back of the house a covered bridge led across a street, which consisted of two walls, into a wilderness of flowers, all a tangle, which was the harem-garden, where I passed some hours; and here I might have remained many days, but that dozing one 'foreday with those fancied others, it was as if there occurred a laugh somewhere, and a thing said: "But this city is not quite dead!" startling me from deeps of peace to wakefulness; and I said to myself: "If it is not quite dead, it *will* be—with some suddenness!": and that morning I was at the Arsenal.

* * *

It is long since I have so enjoyed, to the spine. It may be "The White" who has the guidance of my life, but assuredly it is "the Black" who governs in my soul.

Grandly did old Stamboul, Galata, Tophana, Kassim, right out beyond the walls of Phanar and Eyoub, blaze and flare—the whole place, except one bit of Galata, being like so much tinder; and in the five hours between 8 p. m. and 1 a. m. all was over. I saw the tops of all that forest of cemetery-cypresses round the tombs of the Osmanlis outside the walls, and those in the cemetery of Kassim, and those round the mosque of Eyoub, shrivel away instantaneously, like flimsy hair snatched by a flame; I saw the Genoese tower of Galata go heading obliquely on an upward curve, like Sir Roger de Coverley and wild rockets, and burst high, with a report; in pairs, and trios, and fours, I saw the cupolas of

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the fourteen great mosques give in and sink, or soar and rain, and the great minarets nod the forehead, and drop; and I saw the flame-sheets reach out and out across the empty breadth of the Etmeidan —three hundred yards—to the six minarets of the Mosque of Achmet, wrapping the red-granite obelisk in the centre; and across the breadth of the Serai-Meidani it reached to the buildings of the Seraglio and the Sublime Porte; and across those waste spaces between the houses and the great wall; and across the seventy or eighty arcaded bazaars, all-enwrapping, it reached; and the spirit of fire grew upon me: for the Golden Horn itself was a tongue of fire, crowded, west of the galley-harbour, with exploding battleships, corvettes, frigates, brigs, and east, with a region of gondolas, feluccas, caïques, merchantmen, aburn; on my left crackled Scutari; and I had sent out forty craft under low horse-powers of air, with fuses timed for 11 p.m., to light with their roaming fires the Sea of Marmora: so before midnight I was girdled in one furnace and gulf of fire, sea and sky inflamed, and earth aflare.

Not far from me to the left I saw the Tophana barracks of the Cannoniers, and the Artillery-works, after long reluctance and delay, take wing together; and three minutes later, down by the water, the barracks of the Bombardiers and the Military School together, grandly, grandly; and then, to the right, in the valley of Kassim, the Arsenal: these five riding the sky like smoky suns, and pouring daylight of Tophet over many a mile of sea and country; also I saw the two lines of ruddier flaring where the barge-bridge and the raft-bridge over the Golden Horn galloped in haste to burn; and all that vastness burned in haste, faster and faster—to fervour—to carnival—to unanimous acme: and when its roaring railed at the infinite, and the might of its glowing heart was gravitation, being, sensation, then my forehead drooped, and, sighing as it was my final sigh, I tumbled drunk.

* * *

O wild Providence! Unfathomable madness of Heaven! that ever I should write what now I write! I will not write it. . . .

* * *

The hissing of it! It must be some frantic fancy! A tearing-out of the hair to scatter on the ranting fire-cataracts of Saturn! My hand will not write it!

* * *

In God's name . . . During four nights after the fire I slept in a house—French, as I saw by the books, &c., probably the Ambassador's, for it has vast gardens and a good view over the sea, situated on that east declivity of Pera—one of the houses which, for my safety, I had left standing round the minaret whence I had watched, this minaret being at the top of the Mussulman quarter on the heights of Taxim, between Pera proper and Foundoucli; and down below, both at the quay of Foundoucli and at that of Tophana, I had left under shelter two caïques for double-safety, one a Sultan's gilt craft, with the gold-spur at the prow, and one a boat of those zaptias that patrolled the Golden Horn as water-police: by one or other of which I meant to reach the *Speranza*, she being safely anchored some distance up the Bosphorous coast.

So on the fifth morning I set out for the

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Tophana quay; but, as some rain had fallen overnight, this had re-excited the thin smoke resembling quenched steam, which, as from some reeking district of Abaddon, still trickled upward over many a square-mile of blackened tract, though of flame I could see no sign; and I had not advanced far over every sort of *débris* when I found my eyes watering, my throat choked, my way almost blocked by roughness: whereupon I said "I will turn back, cross the region of tombs and barren behind Pera, descend the hill, get the zaptia boat at the Foundoucli quay, and so reach the *Speranza*."

Accordingly, I made my way out of the quarter of smoke, walked beyond the limits of smouldering ruin and tomb, and soon entered a woodland, singed at the beginning, but some green and flourishing as the jungle. This cooled and soothed me; and, being in no hurry to reach the ship, I was led on and on, in a north-western direction, I think. Somewhere thereabouts, I thought, was the place they called "The Sweet Waters," and I went on with some notion of coming upon them, thinking to pass the day, until afternoon, lost in that forest, where nature in just twenty years has rushed back to an exuberance of savagery, everywhere now the wildest vegetation, dim dells, rills wimpling through twilights of mimosa, pendulous fuchsia, palm, cypress, mulberry, jonquil, narcissus, daffodil, rhododendron, acacia, fig.

Once I stumbled upon a cemetery of old gilt tombs, absolutely overgrown and lost, and anon got glimpses of little trellised yalis choked in boscage, as with a listless foot I moved, munching an almond or an olive, though I could vow that olives were not formerly indigenous to any soil so northern; yet here they are now in plenty, though elementary: so that modifications whose end I cannot see are clearly proceeding in everything, some of the cedars that I met that day being immense beyond anything I ever saw; and the thought, I remember, was in my head, that if a twig or a leaf should turn into a bird, or into a fish with wings, and fly before my eyes, what then should I do? and I would eye a bush suspiciously a little.

After a long time I penetrated into a very sombre grove, where, the day outside the wood being brilliant, grilling, breathless, the leaves and flowers hung motionless, so that I seemed to be hearing on my eardrum, the booming of the muteness of the universe, and when my foot split a twig it produced the report of pistols. Then I got to a glade in the tangle, about eight yards across, that gave out a fragrance of lime and orange, where the twilight just enabled me to see some old bones, three skulls, the edge of a tam-tam prying out from a tuft of wild corn with corn-flowers, some golden champac, and all round a gushing of muskroses. I had stopped—*why* I do not recollect—perhaps at the thought that, if I was not getting to the Sweet Water, I should seriously be setting about seeking my way out; and, as I stood looking about me, I remember that some cruising insect drew near my ear its lonesome drone.

Suddenly, God knows, I started. . . .

I believed—I dreamed—that I saw a pressure in a bed of moss and violets, *recently made!* and while I stood poring upon that impossible thing, I believed—I dreamed—the lunacy of it!—that I heard a laugh . . . the laugh, my good God, of a human soul.

Or it seemed half a laugh, and half a sob: and it passed from me in one fleeting instant.

Laughs, and sobs, and absurd hallucinations, I had often heard before, feet walking, noises behind me; and, even as I had heard them, I had known that they were nothing: but brief as was this impression, it was yet so thrillingly *real*, that my heart received as it were the shock of death, and I was shot backward into a mass of moss, where I remained sustained on my right palm, while the left pressed my labouring breast; and there, toiling to draw my breath, I lay still, all my soul focussed into my ears; but now could hear no sound, save only the hum of the dumbness of the inane.

There was, however, the foot-print: if my eye and ear should so conspire against me, that, I thought, was hard.

Still I lay, still, in that same position, without a stir, sick and dry-mouthed, infirm, with dying breaths: but keen, keen—and malign.

I would wait, I said to myself, I would be cunning as snakes, though so woefully sick and invalid: I would make no sound. . . .

After some time I became aware that my eyes were leering—leering in one direction: and immediately the fact that I had a sense of direction proved to me that I must, *in truth*, have heard something! whereupon I strove—I contrived—to raise myself; and, as I stood upright, swaying there, not the terrors of death alone were

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in my breast, but the authority of the monarch was on my forehead.

I moved: I found the strength. . . .

Slow step by slow step, with daintiest noiselessness, I moved to a thread of moss that led from the glade into the grove; and along its zigzag way I wound—toward the sound, in my ears now the noising of some streamlet, while, following the moss-path, I was led into a mass of bush which reached only two or three feet above my head; and through this, stealing, I wheedled my painful way, got out upon a strip of long-grass, to be faced now by a wall of acacia-trees, prickly pear, pichulas, three yards before me: between which and forest beyond I got glimpses of a streamlet's gleams.

On my hands and knees I crept toward the acacia-thicket; entered it a little; and leaning far forward, peered. And there—at once—ten yards in front, rather to my right—I saw.

Strange to say, my agitation, instead of intensifying to the point of apoplexy and death, now, at the actual sight, subsided to something like calm: and with a malign and sullen eye askance I knelt, eyeing her there.

* * *

She was on her knees, her palms on the ground supporting her, at the margin of the streamlet; leaning over she was, eyeing with a species of shyness, and of startled surprise, the reflexion of her face in the waves: and I, with a sullen eye askance, knelt there, and finally stood, regarding her during five, six, good minutes of time.

* * *

I believe that her half-a-laugh and half-a-sob which I had heard had been the effect of astonishment at seeing her image in water; and I firmly believe, from the expression of her face, that this was the first day that she had seen it.

* * *

Never, I felt, as I observed her, had I beheld on earth a being so fair (though, analysing now at leisure, I can conclude that in reality there was nothing very remarkable about her looks): her hair, fairer than auburn, and frizzy, forming a robe over her scanty garment, to below the hips, some strings of it falling, too, into the water; her eyes, a violet blue, wide in the silliest look of bewilderment; and when, while I eyed and eyed her, she slowly rose, at once I remarked in all her manner an air of unfamiliarity with nature, as of one all at a loss what to do, her pupils looking unused and shy to light, and I could swear that that was the first day in which she had seen a tree or a stream.

Her age appeared seventeen or eighteen; I could conjecture that she was of Circassian blood, or, at least, origin; her skin whitey-brown, or old ivory-white.

Motionless she stood, at a loss: took a lock of her hair, and drew it through her lips; and there was some look in her eyes, which I could now plainly see, that somehow indicated a hunger going wild, though the wood was full of food. After letting go her hair, she stood again feckless and imbecile, her head hung sideward, pitiable to see I think now: for, though no faintest pity visited me then, it was evident that she did not know what to make of the look of things. At last she sat on a moss-bank, reached and took a musk-rose, put it on her palm, looked hopelessly at it.

* * *

One minute after my actual sight of her my excess of excitement, I say, had died down to something like calm. The earth was mine by old right: I felt that; and this creature a slave, with whom, without heat or haste, I might perform my will: for several minutes I stood coolly enough considering what that will should be.

The little canghiar, its silver handle encrusted with coral, its curved blade sharp as a razor, was as usual at my girdle: and the obscenest of the fiends was whispering at my ear with persistence: "Kill, kill—and eat."

Why I should have killed her I do not know: that question I now ask myself, wondering now whether it may be true, true, that it is *"not good"* for man to be alone. There was a religious sect once in the past which called itself "Socialist," and with these must have been the truth, man being at his highest when most social, at his lowest when isolated: for the earth gets hold of all isolation, and draws it, to make it fierce, base, and materialistic, like sultans, aristocracies, and so on; but Heaven is where two or three are gathered together.

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It may be so: I do not know, nor care; but I know that after twenty years of loneliness on a planet the soul of man is more enamoured of loneliness than of living, shrinking like a nerve from the rude intrusion of another into the furtive realm of self, shrinking with that bitterness with which solitary castes—Brahmins, patricians, aristocracies, monopolists—always resisted any attempt to invade their domain of privileges.

Also it may be true, it may, it may, that after twenty years of solitary selfishness a man becomes, without suspecting it, without noticing the stages of evolution, a real or true beast, rabid, prowling, like that King of Babylon, his nails like bird's claws, his hair like eagles' feathers, with instincts all inflamed and fierce, delighting in darkness and crime for their own sake. I do not know, nor care; but I know that, as I drew the canghiar, the crookedest and slyest of the guiles of the Pit was whispering me, tongue in cheek, "Kill, kill—and wallow."

With anguished gradualness, as a glacier stirs, tender as a nerve of each leaf that touched me, I moved, I stole, toward her through the belt of bush, the knife behind my back—steadily though slow—till there came a restraint, a check—I felt myself held back—had to stop—one of the sheaves of my beard having caught in a limb of prickly-pear.

I set to disentangling it; and it was, I believe, at the instant of succeeding that I first observed the condition of the sky, a strip of which I could spy across the rivulet: a sky which a little previously had been pretty clear, but now was busy with clouds; and it was a sinister muttering of thunder that had made me raise my lids and see it.

When my eyes came down again to the sitting figure, she was looking foolishly round the sky with an expression which as good as proved that the girl had never before heard that sound of thunder, or anyway, had no notion what it could bode: for my fixed leer lost not one of her actions, while inch by inch, not breathing, cautious as the poise of a balance, I crawled. And suddenly, with a rush, I was out in the open, running her down. . . .

She leapt: perhaps two, perhaps three paces she fled; then stock still she stood —within five yards of me—with expanded nostrils, with enquiring eyes.

I saw it all in one instant, and in one instant all was over. I had not checked the impetus of my run at her stoppage, and was on the point of reaching her with the knife uplifted, when I was checked and stricken by a stupendous violence: a flash of blinding light, attracted by the blade in my hand, struck jarring through my frame, and in the same moment the most passionate crash of thunder that ever racked a poor human heart felled me flat. The canghiar, snatched from my hand, pitched near the creature's feet.

I did not entirely lose consciousness, though, surely, the Powers no longer hide themselves from me, and their contact is too intolerably rough and vigorous for a poor mortal man: so during, I think, three or four minutes I lay so astounded under that bullying outcry of wrath, that I could not budge an inch; and when at last I did sit up, the creature was standing near me with a kind of smile, holding out to me the weapon in a pouring rain.

I took it from her, and my doddering fingers dropped it into the stream.

* * *

Pour, pour, came the rain, raining as it can in this place, not long, but a torrent while it lasts, dripping in thick liquidity like a profuse sweat through the wood, I seeking to get back by the way I had come, fleeing, but with difficulty through the embarrassment of timber, and a feeling in me that I was being tracked—as it proved: for when I struck into more open space, almost opposite the west walls, but now on the north side of the Golden Horn, where there is a flat grassy ground somewhere between Kassim and Charkoi, with horror I saw that *protégée* of Heaven, or of someone, not twenty yards behind, following after me like a mechanical figure, it being now three in the afternoon, the rain drowning me through, I weary and hungry, and from all the ruins of Constantinople not one whorl of smoke going up.

I tramped on until I came to the quay of Foundoucli, and the zaptia boat; and there she was with me still, her hair nothing but a thin drowned string down her back.

* * *

Not only can she not speak to me in any language that I know, but she can speak in *no* language: it is my belief that she has *never* spoken; and she never saw a boat, or water, till now, I could vow.

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She dared to come into the boat with me, sat clinging for dear life to the gunwale by her finger-nails, while I paddled the eight hundred yards to the *Speranza;* and she came up to the deck after me, astonishment imprinted on her face when she saw the open water, the boat, the yalis on the coast, and then the ship. But she appears to know little fear—smiled like a child, and on the ship touched this and that, as if each were a living thing.

When I went down to my cabin to change my clothes, the rain now over, I had to shut the door in her face to keep her out; when I opened it there she was; and she followed me to the windlass when I went to set the anchor-engine going: for I intended I suppose, to take her to Imbros, where she might live in one of the broken-down houses of the village; but when the anchor was half up, I stopped the engine, and let the chain run again: for I said "No, I will be alone, I am not a child."

I knew that she was hungry by the look in her eyes: but I cared nothing for that. I was hungry, too: that was all I cared about.

I would not let her be there with me another moment—got down into the boat, and, when she followed, rowed her back all the way past Foundoucli and the Tophana quay to where one turns into the Golden Horn by St. Sophia, round the mouth of the Horn being now a vast semi-circle of charred wreckage, carried out by the river-currents; then, in the Horn, I went up the steps on the Galata side before one comes to where the barge-bridge had been; and when she had come after me on to the embankment, I passed up one of those mounting streets, encumbered now with stone-*débris* and ashes, but still marked by some standing wall-fragments, it being now not far from night, but the air was bright and washed with the rain and afterlight of the sun as the blush of some purplish diamond, the west a Tyre aburn; and when I was two hundred yards up in this mixed quarter of Greeks, Turks, Hebrews, Italians, Albanians, and noise and Cafedjis and wine-bibbing, I, having now turned two corners, suddenly gathered my skirts, spun around, and, as fast as I could, was off at a heavy trot back to the quay.

She was after me; but, being taken by surprise, I suppose, was distanced a little at first, though by the time I could scurry myself down into the boat, she was so close upon me, that she only rescued herself from falling into the water by balancing in her stoppage at the embankment-brink, as I pushed off.

I then set out to get back to the ship, muttering: "You can have Turkey, and I will keep the rest of the world," rowing seaward with my face steadily averted from her, for I would not look to see what she was doing; but, as I turned the point of the quay where the open sea washes rough and loud, to row northward and vanish from her, I heard a babbling outcry—the first sound which she had uttered. I did look then: and she was still near me, for the silly maniac had been racing along the embankment, following me.

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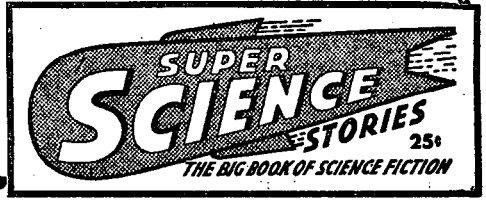

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"Well, you little fool," I cried out across the water, "what are you after now?" and, oh, my God, shall I ever forget that strangeness, of my voice addressing under the sun another soul?

There she stood, whimpering like a dog after me: so I turned the boat around, rowed to the first steps, landed and struck her two stinging slaps, one on each cheek.

While she cowered, surprised no doubt, I took her by the hand, led her back to the boat, rowed over to the Stamboul side, landed, and set off, still holding her hand, my object being to find some sort of house near by, not hopelessly eaten out by fire, in which to leave her: for in all Galata there was clearly none, and Pera, I thought, was too far to walk to.

But it would have been better if I had gone to Pera, for we had to walk quite three miles from Seraglio Point all along the city battlements to the Seven-towers, she picking her barefooted way after me though the Sahara of charred stuff, and night now well arrived, the moon at large in the vast of heaven, rendering the lonesomeness of the ruins tenfold desolate, so that my bosom smote me then with bitterness, and I had a vision of myself that night which I will not write on paper.

At last, however, pretty late in the evening, I got to see a mansion with a façade of green lattice-work, and a shaknisier, and terrace-roof, which had been hidden from me by the arcades of a bazaar—this bazaar being a vast space at about the centre of Stamboul, one of the largest of the bazaars, I should think—in the middle of which stood the mansion, the home of some pacha or vizier, for it had a very distinguished look in that place; and it seemed little injured, though the vegetation which had choked thousands of calcined bones of man, mule, camel, horse: for all was illumined in that lucid, yet so pensive and forlorn, moonlight, that Orient moonlight of mystery that illumines Persepolis, and Babylon, and ruined cities of the Anakim.

The house, I knew, would contain divans, *yatags*, cushions, foods, and a hundred luxuries still good, for it was all shut in by a wall, though the foliage over the wall had been singed away, and the gate, all charred, gave way at a push from my palm; and now I crossed a court to the house, threw open a little lattice-door in the façade under the shaknisier, and entered. Here it was dark: and the instant that she, too, was within, out I slipped quick, slammed the door in her face, and hooked it upon her by a little hook over the latch.

I continued my grum and melancholy way, hollow with hunger, intending to be off that night for Imbros.

But I had hardly advanced twenty steps, when I was aware of a strangled cry, apparently in mid-air behind me, and glancing back, beheld her through the gateway lying a white thing in black stubble-ashes, she having apparently jumped from a casement of lattice on a level with the little shaknisier-grating, through which once peeped bright eyes, twenty-five feet high.

I don't suppose that she was conscious of danger in jumping: for the laws of nature are new to her; and, having sought and found the opening, she may have just come naïvely after me as the cascade leaps and does not care. When I paced back and pulled at her arm, I found that she could not stand, her face screwed in mute pain, no moaning, her left foot bloody: and by the wounded foot I took her, and drew her so through the cinders of the court, and hurled her like a little cur with my whole force within the doorway, cursing her.

Now I would not trudge back to the ship, but struck a match, and went looking at Moorish arches round the court, under one of which I had hung a lantern of crimson silk; and near two in the morning I dropped to sleep, a deeper peace of gloom now brooding where so long the hobgoblin Mogul of the moon had governed.

* * *

When it was day I rose and made my way to the front, intending that that should be my final night in this place: for through the night, sleeping and waking, the thing which had taken place filled my brain, deepening from one depth of incredibility to a deeper, so that that finally I arrived at a kind of conviction that it could be nothing but a drunken dream; but, as I opened my eyes afresh, the realisation of that event flashed like a pang of lightning through my frame, and saying "I will go again to the far Orient, and forget," I set out from the court, not knowing what had become of her during the night; till, having arrived at the outer apartment, with a start I saw her lying there by the door, asleep sideways, head on arm, in the same spot where I had tossed her: so softly, softly I stept over

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"There are two powers which I have called "Black" and "White"—
one of which seems to seek my destruction, the other my deliverance."

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her, got out, was off at a clandestine trot—the morning all in *fête*, very fresh and pure—and, after running two hundred yards to one of the bazaar-arches, I stopped, looking back to see if I was followed; but all that space was desolately empty, and I then walked on past the arch of ogives, the panorama of destruction now outspread before me—a few walls still standing, their windows framing the sky beyond, here and there a pillar or half-minaret, still some trunks without branches down within the Seraglio-walls, in Eyoub and Phanar branchless forests, on the northern horizon Pera still there; and, all between, blackness, stones, a rolling landscape of ravin, like the hilly pack-ice of the Pole, if its snow were ink; and to the right Scutari, black, laid low, with its suburb of tombs and some stumps of its woods, the sea brisk, blue-eyed, with its mob of *débris*-scum floating brown before the mouth of the Golden Horn: for I stood pretty uplifted at the middle of Stamboul, somewhere in the region of the Suleimanieh, or of Sultan-Selim, as I judged, with vistas, into abstract distances and mirage: but to me it looked too vast, too lonesome; and after advancing a score of yards beyond the bazaar, I yearned and turned back.

* * *

I found the creature still asleep at the house-door, and, kicking her, woke her: on which she sprang up with a start of surprise and quite a sinuous agility, to stare there at me, till, separating reality from dream and habit, she realised me, and then immediately fell afresh, in pain: so I hauled her up, and made her limp after me through several halls to the inner court and the well, where I set her among the bush on the alabaster, took her foot in my lap, examined it, drew water, washed it, and bandaged it with a rag torn from my caftan-hem, now and again talking gruffly to her, so that she might no more follow me.

After which I had breakfast by the kiosk-steps, and when I had finished, put a mass of truffled *foie gras* on a plate, brushed through the thicket to the well, and gave it to her. She took it, but looked foolish, not eating, so with my forefinger I put some into her mouth, whereupon she fell to devouring it; I also gave her some gingerbread, a handful of bonbons, some Krishnu wine, and some anisette.

I then started out afresh, harshly telling her to stay there, and left her seated on the well, her hair hanging down the opening, she peering after me through the bush; but I had not half got to the bazaar-portal, when, glancing anxiously back, I saw that she was limping after me: so that this creature tracks me in the manner of a shell led away in the wake of a ship.

I now returned with her to the house, for it was necessary that I should excogitate some further method of dodging her. That was four days ago, and here I have stayed: for the house and court are sufficiently agreeable, and are a museum of *objets d'art*. It is settled, however, that tomorrow I be off to Imbros.

* * *

She has found a pair of trousers called *shintiyan*, made of white-silk with yellow stripes, and having drawn up the bottoms to her knees, tied them there, so that their voluminous folds, overhanging to the ankles, have the look of a skirt; over this she had put on a chemise, or quamis, of chiffon, reaching to the hips; then a jacket or vest of scarlet satin, embroidered in gold and precious stones, reaching to the waist, tight-fitting; and, upon her little feet little baboosh-slippers, blue, then anklets, on her fingers rings, round her neck a necklace of sequins.

An hour later I saw her in the arcade round the court, and, to my astonishment, she had a plait down her back, and round her brows a feredjeh, or hood, of sky-blue silk, precisely as in the picture of a woman in a fresco on one of the walls.

* * *

Here is a question the answer to which would be interesting to me: Whether or not for twenty years—or say rather twenty centuries—I have been stark mad, a raving maniac; and whether or not I am now suddenly sane, seated here writing in my right mind, my whole tone changed or speedily changing? And whether such change may be owing to the presence of only one other being on the sphere with me?

* * *

This singular being! Where she had lived, and how, is a problem beyond all solving. During her twenty years she has never seen almond figs, nuts, liqueurs, chocolate, conserves, vegetables, sugar, oil,

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honey, sweetmeats, orange-sherbert, mastic, salt, raki, tobacco, for she has shown perplexity at all these: but she has known and tasted *white wine*: I could see that. Here, then, is a mystery.

* * *

I have not gone to Imbros, but remained here some days longer, taking stock of her.

I have permitted her to sit in a corner of the apartment at mealtimes, not far from where I eat; and I have given her to eat.

She is wonderfully clever! I continually find that, after an incredibly brief time, she had adapted herself to this or that, already wearing her new clothes with a certain coquetry, as though a clothes-wearer by birth; and, without in the least seeming observant—for she gives an impression of giddiness—she reckons me up, I am convinced, closely: knows when I am talking roughly, bidding her go, bidding her come, sick of her, tolerant of her, scorning her, cursing her; nay, if I even wish her to the devil, she sees, and will disappear. Yesterday I noticed something queer about her, and discovered that she had been staining her lids with kohol, like the *hanums*: so that, having found some she must have guessed its use from the pictures as she had with the clothes: wonderfully clever! imitative as a mirror. Again, two forenoons ago, on seeing a kittur of mother-of-pearl, I played an air, sitting under the arcade; I could see her, meanwhile, behind one of the pillars on the opposite side of the court listening closely, and, I fancied, panting; and, on returning from a walk beyond the Phanar walls on the afternoon, I heard the same air coming out from the house, she repeating it faultlessly by ear; also, during the forenoon of the day before, I came upon her—for footsteps make no sound in this house—in the pacha's visitor's hall: and what was she at? copying the postures of three dancing-girls frescoed there! so that she would seem to have a character as flighty as a butterfly's, and troubles about nothing.

* * *

Now I know.

I had noticed that at the beginning of each meal she seemed to have something on her mind, going toward the door, hesitating as if to see whether I would follow, and then returning; and at length yesterday, after sitting to eat, she jumped up, uttering to my infinite surprise her first word—with a very experimental effort of the tongue, like a fledgling which tries the air: the word *"Come."*

That forenoon, on meeting her in the court, I had told her to repeat some words after me; but she had made no attempt, as if shy to break the silence of her life; and now I felt some species of childish pleasure in hearing her utter that word, frequently no doubt heard from me: so, after hurriedly eating, I went with her, saying to myself "She must be about to shew me the food to which she is accustomed, and that may solve her origin."

And so it has proved. I have now discovered that, to the moment when she saw me, she had tasted only dates, and that white wine of Ismidt which the Koran permits.

As it was getting dark, I lit and took with me the red-silk lantern, and we set out, she leading, walking confoundedly fast, slackening when I swore at her, then getting fast again: and she walks with a kind of levity, flightiness, liberated *furore*, very difficut to describe, as though space were a luxury to be revelled in. By what instinctive cleverness or vigour of memory she found her way I cannot tell; but she led me such a walk that night, miles, miles, till I became furious, darkness having soon fallen, with only a faint moon obscured by cloud, and a drizzle which haunted the air, she without light climbing and picking her thinly-slippered steps over piles of stone with a flying ply of foot, I anon dipping a foot with horror into one of those little ponds which always spotted the Stamboul streets. In the moments when I was nearer her I would see her peer upward toward Pera, as if that were a known landmark, would note the constant aspen caprices of the coral drops rocking in her ears—for I had pierced her ears—of her limbs, and would wonder with a groan if Pera was our goal.

Our goal was even beyond Pera. When we had got to the Golden Horn, she pointed to my caïque which lay at Old Seraglio Steps, and over the water we went, she lying quite at ease now, her face at the level of the water in the centre of the caïque's crescent-shape, as nonchalant as a *hanum* of old, engaged in some escapade, going over the Babel of Galata and that north bank of the Horn.

Then through Galata we passed, I already cursing the journey; and, following the line of the coast and that steep thor-

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oughfare of Pera, we came at last, almost in the country, to a great wall, and to the entrance to a great terraced garden, whose limits were invisible, many of the avenues being still intact.

I knew at once—had laid a special fuse-train in the palace at the top of the terraces: the royal palace, Yildiz.

Up and up we mounted through the grounds, a few unburned persons in rags of uniform still discernible at random, as the lantern swung past them: a musician in blue, a fantassin in scarlet, three domestics of the palace in red-and-orange. . . .

The palace itself was all in ruin, together with all its surrounding barracks, mosque, seraglio, and, when we got to the top of the grounds, presented a picture very like those I have seen of the ruins of Persepolis, only that here the columns, both standing and fallen, were innumerable, and all more or less blackened; and through doorless doorways we moved, down flights of four or five steps immensely-wide, and up them, and over strewn courtyards, by tottery fragments of arcades, all roofless, and tracts of char-coal reaching away between the relics of avenues of columns, I following, expectant, her feet very keen now. Finally, down a flight of narrow steps, very dislocated, we jolted to a level which, I thought, must be the floor of the palace vaults: for at the foot of the steps we stood on a plain of plaster, which shewed the marks of the flames; and over this the girl spurted, pointing with eager recognition to a hole in it, and disappeared down the hole.

When I, on following to the hole, lowered the lantern into it, I saw that the drop down was about eight feet, made less than six feet by a heap of stone-rubbish below, the falling of which had caused the hole: and it was by standing on this rubbish-heap, I knew at once, that she had managed to climb out under the sky.

Dropping down now, I found myself in a cellar with a floor of marl, musty and damp, but so very vast in area, that even in the day-time, I believe, I could not have made out its limits: for I think that it extends under the whole palace and its environs—a stretch of space of which, with the lantern, I could only see a little portion.

She still leading me keenly on, I presently came upon a region of boxes, each about two feet square, nine inches high, made of flimsy laths, packed to the roof; and two hundred feet from these I saw, where she pointed, a region of bottles, bottles with paunches in chemises of wicker-work, stretching away into dimness and invisibility: the boxes, of which a throng lay broken open, as they can be by just wrenching at a crack, containing dates, and the bottles of which many thousands lay empty, containing old Ismidt wine. Some fifty or sixty casks—covered with mildew—some broken bits of furniture, a cube of parchments—large as a cottage, rotting, curling—showed that this cellar had been more or less loosely used for the storage of unwanted odds-and-ends.

It had been used, too, as a domestic prison: for in the lane bewixt the region of boxes and the region of bottles there lay the skeleton of a woman, the details of whose costume were still appreciable, she having thin shackles of brass on her wrists: and when I had scrutinized her I knew the history of the being standing silent by my side.

This being is a daughter of the Sultan, as I assumed when I had once understood that the skeleton is both the skeleton of her mother, and the skeleton of the Sultana.

That the skeleton was her mother is evident: for when the cloud came, twenty years since, the woman was in the prison, which must have been air-tight, and with her the girl; and since the girl is certainly not over twenty—she looks younger—she must have been either unborn or a baby: but a baby would hardly be imprisoned with another than its mother. I rather think that the girl was unborn at the moment of the cloud, and was born in the cellar.

That the mother was the Sultana is evident from her fragments of dress, and the symbolic character of her every ornament—crescent ear-rings, heron-feather, and the blue campaca enamelled in a bracelet—this poor woman having perhaps been the victim of some fit of imperial spleen, envenomed by some domestic misdemeanour which may have been pardoned in a day, had not death overtaken her master and humanity.

There are five steps near the centre of the cellar, leading up to a trap-door of iron, at present fastened, this apparently being the only opening into this hole: and this trap-door must have been so almost air-tight as to exclude the intrusion of the poison in deadly quantity.

But how rare—how strange—the coincidence of chances here. For, if the trap-door was quite air-tight, I cannot think

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that the supply of oxygen in the cellar, large as it was, would have been sufficient to last the creature twenty years, to say nothing of what her mother breathed before death: for I assume that the woman must have continued to live some time in her dungeon, sufficiently long, at least, to teach her child to acquire its fare of dates and wine: so that the door must have been only just hermetic enough to block the poison, yet admit some oxygen—unless the place was quite air-tight at the time of the catastrophe, and some crack which I have not observed, due perhaps to earthquake, opened to admit oxygen and some sunlight after the poison was dissipated: in any case—the all-but-infinite rarity of the probability!

Thinking these things I climbed out, and we walked to Pera, where I slept in a white-stone house in five or six acres of garden overlooking the cemetery of Kassim, having pointed out to the creature another house in which to sleep.

This creature! what a history! After existing twenty years in a sunless universe hardly nine acres wide, she one day saw the only sky which she knew collapse at one point! a hole opens into yet a universe beyond!

It was *I* who had arrived, and fired a city, and set her free.

* * *

Ah, I see something now! I see! it was for this that I was preserved: I to be a species of First-man, and this creature to be my Eve! That is it! *"The White"* does not admit defeat—would recommence the race—at the final, the eleventh hour, in spite of everything, would twist rout into victory and outwit that Other.

However, if this be so—and I seem to see it—then, in that White scheme is a flaw; at one point that elaborate Forethought rambles: for I am such, that I choose to refuse.

Certain, in this matter I am on the side of "Black": and since it depends absolutely upon me, this time Black wins.

No more men down this way after me, ye Powers! To you the question may be nothing more than a gaming-table exhilaration as to the outcome of your aërial squabble, but to the poor beggars who had to bear the racks, rackrents, wrongs, sorrows, horrors, it was strong stuff, you know!

Oh, the deep, deep pain—the commonness and dullness—of that bungling ant-hill, now happily wiped out! Those lubber "lords" and "ladies" of my day! And there was a man named Judas who "betrayed" that gentle Jesus, and some Roman dog named Galba, and a French devil, Gilles de Raiz: and the rest were much the same. No, not a good race, that small infantry that called itself Man; and here, falling on my knees before God and evil, I vow: Never through me shall it sprout and fester afresh.

* * *

I cannot realize her! Not at all, at all, at all! If she is out of my sight five minutes, I fall to doubting her realness; if I lose her during two hours, all the old feelings, like certainties, recur, that I have merely been dreaming—that this appearance cannot be an objective fact of experience, since the impossible is impossible.

Seventeen years, long years of madness. . . .

* * *

To-morrow I start for Imbros: and whether this being chooses to follow me, or whether she stays here, I will see her from the moment I am there no more.

* * *

She must rise very early. I who am now regularly on the palace-roof at day break, from the silks of the galleries, or from the steps of the telescope-kiosk, may detect her away down below, a microscopic form running about the sward, or staring up in wonder at the palace from the lake's border.

When three months ago she came with me to Imbros, I left her in that house in the village with the green jalousies facing the beach, where there was everything that she would need; but I knew that, like all the houses down there now, it leaked profusely: so the next day I went down to that stair cut through the cliff-rock south of the village, climbed it, and half a mile onward found a park and villa which I had seen from the sea, the villa almost intact, strongly built of porphyry, though small, and very like a Western house, with shingles, and three gables, so that I think it may have been the yali of some Englishman, for it has English books, though the only person I observed there was an Aararat Kurd, with ankle-pantaloons and shoulder-cloak; and all in the park, and all about the rock-steps, growths of man-

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dragora, and from the rock-steps to the house an avenue of acacias, mossy underfoot, that join in an arch overhead, the house standing about four yards from the brink of the sea-cliff, whence one can see the *Speranza's* main-topmast in her haven. Then after examining the place I went down again to the village and her house; but she was not there; and two hours long I paced about among the bush of these amateur little alleys and flat-roofed houses without windows (though some have terrace-roofs and a rare aperture), whose yellows, reds, blues, once crude, look now like sweet sunset hues when the flush has just faded, and they faint away. When at last she came running with her lips split, I took her up the rock-steps to the villa; and there she has lived, one of its roof-tips, I now find, being just visible from the northeast corner of the palace-roof, two miles from it.

That evening afresh, when I was leaving her, she made an attempt to follow me; but I was resolved to end it then: so, plucking a sassafras-whip, I cut her deep, three times, until she ran crying.

* * *

So then, what is my fate henceforth?—to think always, from sun to moon, and from moon to sun, of one only thing, and that thing a mite for the microscope? to evolve into Paul Pry to spy upon the hoppings of one sparrow, like some fatuous gossip of old, his greed to peep, his sole faculty to sniff, his glee and his victory to unearth the infinitely insignificant? I would kill her first!

* * *

I am convinced that she is no stay-at-home, but roams continually over the island: for thrice, roaming myself, I have lighted upon her, she that first time rushing with a flushed face, bent upon striking down a butterfly with a bush held in the left hand (for both hands she uses with dexterity)—about ten in the forenoon it was, in her park, at the lower end where grasses grow rank, and there is a hypertrophy of fernery luxuriating between the tree-trunks, and obscurity, and the broken wall of a funeral-kiosk sunk askew under moss, creepers, and wild flowers, behind which I peeped concealed, soaked with dew.

She has had the assurance to modify the dress she had put together from the picture, and was herself a butterfly: for, instead of the shintiyan, she had on baggy pantaloons of azure silk, a zouave of saffron satin hardly reaching to the waist, no feredjé, but a fez with violet tassel, her plait quite tidy, but her forehead-hair wanton, the fez cocked backward, while I got glimpses of her careering heels lifting out of the dropping slipper-sole; and she is pretty clever, but not clever enough, for that butterfly escaped, and in one instant I saw her alter into weary and triste, for in Nature is nothing more fickle than that face, which is like a landscape swept with cloud-shadows on a sunny day. Fast beat my heart that morning, owing to my consciousness that, while I saw, I was unseen, yet might be seen.

And three weeks afterwards I came upon her at noon a good way up yonder, west of the palace, asleep on her arm in an alley between trellises, where rioting wild-vine that overgrew them buried her in gloom; but I had not been peering through the bush three minutes, when up she starts to look ardently about, her quick consciousness, I suspect, having detected a presence, though I think that I contrived to win away unseen. I saw that she keeps her face pretty dirty, all about her mouth being dry-stained with a polychrome of grape, *mûrs*, and other coloured juices, like slobbering *gamins* of old; I could also see that her nose and face are at present sprinkled with little freckles.

Five evenings since, on seeing her a third time, I observed that the primitive instinct to represent the world in *pictures* has been working within her: for she was drawing. It was down in the village, whither I had strolled, and on coming out upon a street from an alley, saw her near, pulled up short, and peered at her on her face all among bush, a bit of board before her, in her fingers a chalk-splinter, and intently she was drawing, her tongue-tip traveling along her short upper-lip from side to side, regularly as a pendulum, her fez tipped far back, her left calf swinging upward from the knee.

She had drawn her yali, and now, as I could see by peering far forward, was drawing the palace from memory, for there were the waving lines meant for the platform-steps, the two pillars, the battlements of the outer court, and before the portal—my turban reaching above the roof, my two sheaves of beard sweeping below my knees—myself.

Something pricked me, and I could not resist uttering a "Hi!" whereupon she

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scrambled like a chamois upright, I pointing to the drawing smiling.

This being has a way of pressing her lips mincingly, while she shakes her face at me, cooing a fond sort of laugh—as she cooed now.

And I: "You are a clever little wretch, you know" —she cocking her right eye, trying to divine my mind with a kind of smile.

"Yes, a clever little wretch," I went on in a rough voice, "clever as a serpent, no doubt: for in the first case it was the Black who used the serpent, and now it is the White: but it will not work this time. Do you know what you are to me, you? My Eve!—a little fool, a little piebald frog like you. But it will not do at all! A nice race it would be with you for mother, and me for father, wouldn't it?—half-criminal like the father, half idiot like the mother: like the last, in short. They used to say, in fact, that the offspring of a brother and sister was always weak-headed; and from such a wedlock came our race, so no wonder it was what it was: and so it would have to be again now. Well, no, whatever cares we take, the White will trick us: so no risks—unless we have the children, and cut their throats at birth; but you would not like that at all, I know; and, on the whole, it would not work, for the White would be striking a poor man blind with His lightning, if I tried that on.

"No, then: the modern Adam is some six hundred thousand years wiser than the first—you see? less instinctive, more rational. The first 'disobeyed' by commission; I by commission; only his 'disobedience' was a 'sin,' mine is a heroism. I have not been a particularly ideal species of beast so far, you know: but in me, Adam Jeffson—I swear it—the race shall at last attain to nobility, the nobility of self-extinction. I shall turn out trumps; shall prove myself stronger than Tendency, World-Genius, Providence, Currents of Fate, White Power, Black Power, or whatever is the name of it. No more Borgias, 'lords,' Napoleons, Peaces, Rockefellers, Hundred Years' Wars—you see?"

She kept her eye obliquely cocked upward like a little fool, wondering, no doubt, what I was saying.

"And, talking of Borgia," I went on, "I shall call you that henceforth, to keep me reminded. So that is your name—not Eve—but Borgia, who was a Poisoner, you see? And that is your name now—not Eve, but Borgia—to remind me, you most perilous little speckled viper! And in order that I may no more see your foolish little pretty phiz, I decree that, for the future, you wear a *yashmak* to cover up your lips, which, I can see, were meant to be fascinating, though dirty; and you can leave the blue-blue eyes, and the little nose, with the freckles on its white skin, uncovered, enough. Meantime, if you care to see how to draw a palace—I will show you."

Before I stretched my hand she was presenting the board—so that she had perceived something of my meaning! but somewhat of guttural in my tone had wounded her, for she presented it looking glum, her under-lip pushing crooked out, very pathetically, I must say, as usual when she is inclined to cry.

Well, in a few strokes I drew the palace, and herself standing at the portal betwixt the pillars: and now great was her satisfaction, for when she pointed to the figure and then to herself interrogatively, and I nodded "yes," she went cooing her fond monotone with closed lips mincing; and it is clear that, in spite of my beatings, she but slightly fears me.

Before I could move away I felt some rain-drops, and down in some seconds rushed a shower; also I saw that the vault was fast darkening, so I darted into the nearest of the piggeries, leaving her glancing sideways skyward with the quaintest interest in the rain: for she is not yet familiarized with things, and seems to regard them with an artless seriousness and curiosity, as though they were living things, comrades as good as herself. Even when she presently joined me, she reached out to feel the drops.

Now there tumbled out a thunder-clap, a wind was blowing up, rain spraying about me: for these wee box-houses' window-panes (made, I believe, of paper saturated in almond-oil), have long disappeared, and rains, penetrating by roof and rare window, splash the bones of men: so I was gathering up my skirts to rush toward other shelter, when she spurted from the door to me, saying in her experimental utterance that word of hers: "*Come*," and ran out in advance, while I, tossing my external robe over my turban, followed, to urge my way against the scourge of the rain-wash.

She took the way, by the horse pond, through an alley between two walls, then down a path through wood to the rock-steps; and up we ran, and along the hill, to her yali, which is a mile nearer the village than the palace is, though by the time we pelted into its shelter we were wet.

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Sudden darkness had come; but she quickly unearthed some matches, lit one, looking at it with a certain air of meditation; then applied it to a candle and to a bronze Western lamp on the table, which I had taught her to oil and light; and when I pointed to a mangal like one which she had seen me light to warm bath-waters in Stamboul, she ran to the kitchen, ran back with some sticks, and very cleverly lit them. And there for hours I sat that night reading (the first time for many a year): reading a book by the poet Milton, found in a bookcase on the other side of the Western fire-place by which the mangal stood: and most strange, most novel, I found that oratory about Black Power and White Power and warring angels that night, while the storm raged: for this man, though scant in brain-power like the ancients in general, had evidently taken no end of pains with his book and done it wonderfully well, too, making the thing hum; and I could not conceive why he should have been at that trouble, unless it was for the reason that I reared the palace—some spark in a man—and he would be like the Gods—but that is vanity.

Well, there is venom about the tempests recently that really transcends bounds; I believe I have noted it in these sheets before—I never could have conceived of turbulences so huge, such as I heard them that midnight seated there smoking a chibouque, reading, listening to the bawlings and lamentations of that haunted air, shrinking from it, fearing even for the *Speranza* by her quay in the harbour, and for the palace-pillars.

But what astonished me was that female thing: for after being seated on the ottoman to my right some time, she dropped sideways asleep, not the least fear about her, though I should have thought that nervousness at such a turmoil would be so certain to occur in her; and whence she has this nonchalant confidence in the cosmos into which she has so suddenly come I do not know: for it is as though someone inspired her with the mood of lightness, saying "Be of good cheer, and care not a fig about anything: for God is God."

I heard the ocean hawking hoarse, hurtling like heavy ordnance against the bluffs below, where the seas meet the southern of the two claws of land that form the harbour; and the thought came into my head:

"If, now, I began teaching her to speak, to read, I could sometimes make her read to me."

The winds were wilfully wrestling with the villa to wring it away into the drear infinities of the night, and I could not but heave a sigh: "Alas for us two cast-aways of our race, pieces of flotsam tossed up here a moment, ah me, on this coast of the aeons, soon to be hauled back, O eternity, down the Bottomless of your turbid maw; and upon that strand—who shall say?—shall she next be tossed, and I, separated then perhaps by the stretch of the astral tract?" and such a pity, and a wringing of the heart, seemed in things, that a tear parted from me that dismal midnight.

She started up at a wrath of more appalling volume, rubbing her eyes, with untidied hair (it must have been about midnight), listening a minute with that demure droll interest of hers to the turmoil; then smiled to me; rose then and left the room, presently to come again with a pomegranate and some almonds on a plate, some delicious rich liquor, too, in an Aegean cruche, and silver cup, gilt inside, standing in a zarf; these she placed on the table at my hand, I murmuring "Hospitality."

And now she stood looking at the book, which I read as I ate, with her left eyelid lowered, trying to divine its use, I suppose. Most things she understands quick, but this must have baffled her: for to see one looking fixedly at a thing, and not know what one is looking at it for, must be very disconcerting.

So I held it up before her, saying: "Shall I teach you to read it? If I did, how would you repay me, you Borgia?"

Upon which she cocks her eye, trying to comprehend, the candle-flame, moved by the wind like a brush which paints, flickering on her face, though every cranny was closed; and, God knows, at that moment I pitied the dumb waif, alone in the whole globe with me.

"Perhaps, then," I said, "I will teach you. You are a pitiable little derelict of your race, you know; and two hours every day I will let you come to the palace, and will teach you. But be sure, be careful: if there be danger, I will kill you— assuredly—without fail; and let me begin with a lesson now: say after me: 'White'."

I took her hand, got her to understand that I wanted her to repeat.

"White," said I.

"Hwhite," says she.

"Power," said I.

"Pow-wer," said she.

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"White Power," said I.
"Hwhite Pow-wer," said she.
"White Power shall not," said I.
"Hwhite Pow-wer shall not," said she.
"Prevail," said I.
"Effail," said she.
"Pre-vail!" said I.
"Pe-vvvail," said she.
"White Power shall not prevail," said I.
"Hwhite Pow-wer shall not—fffail," said she.

A thunder which roared as she uttered it seemed to me to go guffawing through the cosmos, and a minute I gazed upon her face with positive fear; till, starting up, I thrust her from my path, and darted forth to battle my way to the palace and my bed.

Such was the ingratitude and fatality which my first attempt, five nights since, to teach her met with; and now it remains to be seen whether my pity for her dumbness, or some servile tendency toward fellowship in myself, will result in any further lesson. Certainly, I think not: for though I have given my word . . . we shall see.

Surely her presence in the world with me—for no doubt it is that—has worked some profound modification in my mood: for gone now are those storm-tossed hours when, stalking like a cock, I flaunted my monarchy in the face of the heavens with blasphemies, or else dribbled, shaking up my body in a wild dance, or was off to reduce some city to ashes and revel in redness and the chucklings of Hell, or rolled in the drunkenness of drugs. It was frenzy!—I see now—it was "not good," "not good." And it rather looks as if it were past—or passing. I have clipped my beard and hair, taken out the ear-rings, and thought of modifying my raiment . . . I will watch to see whether she comes loitering down there round the gate of the lake.

* * *

Her progress is like . . .

* * *

It is some nine months since I wrote that "Her progress is like . . ." and have since had no impulse to write; but I was thinking just now of the tricks and eccentricies of my memory, and, seeing the old book, will record it here: for I have lately been attempting to recall the name of my old home in Britain, where I was born and grew up, and it is gone, gone; may-be it will come back to me later: for I can't say that my memory is bad; there are things—trivial little things sometimes—that come back to me with considerable vividness: for instance, I remember to have met in Paris (I think), long before the poison-cloud, a little Brazilian boy of the colour of coffee-and-milk, whom she now constantly recalls to me: he wore his hair so close-cut, that one could spy the fish-white flesh betwixt, delighted to play by himself about the stairs of the hotel costumed in the spectral balloon-dress of a Pierrot, and I have the impression now that he must have had very large ears—clever as a flea he was, able to gabble six or seven languages, as it were by nature, without having any suspicion that that was at all extraordinary. She has that same light, unconscious, nonchalant cleverness, and easy way of life. It is little more than a year since I commenced to teach her, and already she can speak with a considerable vocabulary (though she does not pronounce the letter "r"); for chemistry she has a craving, a rage, and no little knowledge of it; she has also read, or rather devoured, many books; can write, draw, play the harp: and all she does without effort, rather with that flighty naturalness with which larks took to the wing.

What made me teach her to read was this: one afternoon, some fourteen months ago, I from the roof-kiosk saw her down at the lake-brink, a book in hand, and as she had beheld me looking steadily at books, so she was looking steadily at it, with her head held sideward, rather pathetic, so that I had to laugh: for I spied her through the glass; and whether she is the simplest little goose or the craftiest of rascals I am not yet sure.

I went to Gallipoli for three days in May, and came back bringing a pretty little caïque, a crescent of the moon, which I fetched up in the motor to the lake after two days' labour in cutting a passage through bush-thicket; and it has pleased me to see her lie amid the silks at its middle, while I, plying the paddle a little, heard her say her first words—between eight and ten in the evening it was, though later it became 10 a.m. to noon when the reading began, we seated then on the palace-steps before the portal, her mouth covered with the *yashmak*, the lesson-book a Bible with large letters which I chanced to find at her yali. *Why* she must wear the *yashmak* she has never once asked; and how much she conjec-

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tures, knows, or intends, I have no notion, continually questioning myself as to whether she is all simplicity, or all depth.

That she is conscious of some profound contrast in our structure I cannot doubt: for that I have a long beard, and she none at all, is among the most obvious of facts.

* * *

I have wondered whether a certain *Western-ness*—a growing modernity of tone—may be the result, as far as I am concerned, of her presence with me? I do not know. . . .

* * *

There is the sheen of a lake just visible in the north forest from the palace-top, and in it fish like carp, tench, roach, &c., so in May I searched for a tacke-shop in the Gallipoli Fatmeh-bazaar, and four 12-foot rods, with reels, silk-line, quill-floats, some silk-worm gut, with a packet of No. 7 hooks, and split-shot for sinkers; and, since red-worms, maggots, gentles are common on the island, I felt sure of more fish than I wanted, which was none at all: so, for the amusement, I fished several times, lying at my length in a patch of long-grass overwaved by an enormous cedar, where the bank is steep, and the water deep; and one afternoon she was suddenly there with me, questioned me with her eyes, and when I consented, stayed: so presently I said I would teach her bottom-angling, and sent her heels flying up to the palace for a second rod and tackle.

But that day nothing was done: for, after teaching her to thread the worm and put the gentles on the hooks, I sent her to hunt for worms to chop up for ground-baiting the pitch for the next afternoon, and when this was done it was dinnertime: so I sent her home, for I was then giving the lessons in the morning.

The next day, however, I found her at the bank, taught her to take the sounding for adjusting the float, and she lay down not far from me, holding the rod. So I said to her: "Well, this is better than living in a cellar for years, with nothing to do but walk up and down, sleep, and consume dates and Ismidt wine."

"Yes!" says she.

"Year after year!" I said: "how did you bear it?"

"I was not closs," says she.

"Did you never suspect that there was a world outside of that cellar?" I asked.

"No," says she, "or, lather, yes: but I did not suppose that it was *this* world—another where he lived."

"He who?"

"You ask? He who told me— Oh! a bite!" I saw her float bob under, so, spurting to her, taught her how to strike and play it; and though it turned out to be only a tiny barbel, she was in ecstasies, stooping upon it on her palm, murmuring her found coo.

Then, re-baiting, we lay again: and I said: "But what a life: no exit, no prospect, no hope—"

"Plenty of *hope!*" says she.

"Heavens! of what?"

"I knew vely well that something was lipening over the cellar, or under, or alound, and would come to pass at a certain fixed hour, and that I should see it, and feel it, and it would be vely nice."

"Well, you had to wait for it, anyway. Didn't those years seem *long?*"

"No—sometimes—not often. I was always occupied."

"In doing what?"

"Eating, dlinking, lunning, talking—"

"To *yourself?*"

"Not to myself."

"To whom, then?"

"Why, to the one that told me when I was hungly, and placed the dates there."

"I see. . . . Don't wriggle about, or you will never catch any fish: the maxim of angling is 'Study to be quiet'. . . ."

"O! another!" she called, and this time, all alone, very agilely landed a roach.

And presently I: "But do you mean that you were never sad?"

"Sometimes I would sit and cly," says she—"I did not know why. But if that was 'sadness,' I was never miselable, never, never. And if I clied, it did not last long, I would fall to sleep, for my love would lock me in his lap, and kiss me."

"Which *'love'*?"

"You ask that? But you know! He who told me when I was hungly, and of the thing that was lipening outside the cellar."

"Aha! I see. . . . But in the darkness—were you never afraid?"

"*I!* Of What?"

"Of the unknown."

"Now, how could I be aflaid? The known was the vely opposite to tellible: hunger and dates, thirst and wine, desire to lun and space to lun in, desire to sleep and dleams, yes, dleams! dleams! in sleep: the opposite of tellible; and the unknown was even less tellible than the known: for it was the nice thing that was lipening out-

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side the cellar. How could I be sad—?"

"Ah, yes," said I, "you are a clever little being, no doubt, but your continual fluttering about is fatal to all angling. Isn't it in your nature to keep still a minute? And as to your habits in the cellar—?"

"Another!" she cried with a happy laugh, landing a young chub; and that afternoon caught seven to my one.

* * *

Another day I took her from the pitch to one of the kitchens in the village with some of the fish, until then always thrown away, and taught her cooking: for the only cooking-implement in the palace is the silver alcohol-lamp for coffee and chocolate; so we both scrubbed the utensils, and boil and fry I taught her, and the making of a sauce from vinegar, bottled olives, and American butter from the *Speranza,* and the boiling of rice mixed with flour for ground baiting our pitch; upon which she, at first astonished, was presently all deft housewifeliness, breathless officiousness, and of her own instinctiveness grated some almonds lying there, with which to sprinkle the fried carp. We ate them sitting on the floor together: the first new food, I suppose, save fruits, tasted by me for twenty-one years; nor did I find it disagreeable.

The next day she came up to the palace reading a book which turned out to be a cookery-book in English, found at her yali; and a week later she appeared, out of hours, presenting me a dish of yellow delf containing a mess of gorgeous colours—a boiled chub buried beneath red of pepper, fragments of saffron, greenish sauce, and almonds, but I sent her away, and would have none of her, or of her dish of fish.

* * *

Two miles up, west of the palace, is a ruin in forest, I think of a mosque, though only three pieces of pillars under creepers, and the weedy flour, with the courtyard and steps, remain, before it being an avenue of cedars, the path between the trees choked with long-grass and wild rye reaching to my middle; and here I saw one day a disc of brass, bossed in the middle, which may have been either a shield or part of an antique cymbal, with rings running round it from middle to circumference: so the next day I brought nails, a hammer, a saw, and a box of paints from the *Speranza,* painted the rings in different colours, cut down a lime-trunk, nailed the disc to it, and planted it before the steps: for I said I would make a bull's-eye and do firing-practice down the avenue; and the evening afterwards I was doing at four hundred feet, startling the island with that unusual alarum, when up she comes peering with enquiring eyes: at which I was cross, because my arm, long unused, was firing wide; but I was too proud to say anything, let her look, and soon she understood, laughing every time I made a considerable miss, until at last I turned upon her saying: "If you think it so easy, you may try."

She had been wanting to try, for she came spryly to the offer; and after I had opened and showed her the mechanism, the cartridges, and how to shoot, I put into her hands one of the *Speranza* Colt's: upon which she took her bottom-lip between her teeth, shut her left eye, vaulted out the revolver to the level of her intense right eye, and sent a ball through the centre of the boss.

However, it was a fluke-shot, for I had the satisfaction of seeing her miss every one of the other five, except the last, which hit the black. That, however, was three weeks since, and now my hitting record is forty per cent, and hers ninety-six—most extraordinary: so that it is clear that this creature is the *protégée* of someone, and favouritism is in the world.

* * *

Her book of books is the chemistry-book, and next the Old Testament. Sometimes, at noon or afternoon, I may look abroad from the roof or galleries, and see a remote figure seated on the sward beneath the shade of plane or cedar: and I can always divine that the book she cons there, away from her laboratory, is the Bible—like an old Rabbi: has a passion for stories, and there finds a store.

Three nights ago when it was already quite late, and the moon very glorious, I noted her moving homewards close to the lake, and howled down to her, intending to say "Goodnight"; but she thought that I had called her, and came: and, sitting out on the top step, we talked for hours, she without the *yashmak.*

And, talking about the Bible, says she: "What did Cain to Abel?"

"Knocked him over," I replied, liking to use idioms, with the double object of teaching and teasing her.

"Over what?" says she.

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"Over his heels," I said.

"I do not complehend!"

"He killed him, then."

"That I know. But how did Abel *feel?*"

"Oh, well," I said, "you see bones all round you: the same thing happened to them as to a fish when it lies all still."

"And the men and the fish feel the same after?"

"Precisely the same—lie in a stark trance, and dream a nonsense-dream."

"That is not dleadful. Why were men so aflaid?"

"Because they were all such cowards."

"Oh, not all! not all! far flom cowards."

(This girl, I know not with what motive, has now definitely set herself up against me as the defender of the dead race—with every chance she is at it).

"Many, anyway," I said: "tell me one who was not afraid—"

"Why, they fought in wars—for nothing," says she: "look at Isaac, when Ablaham laid him on the wood to kill him, he did not jump up and lun to hide."

"Well, but," I said, "in books you read of the best people, but there were millions of others—especially about the time of the cloud—on a lower level—common, dull, lubberly, mean, debased, diseased, making the earth a murrain of vices and crimes."

This she did not immediately answer, seated with her back half-toward me, cracking almonds between her teeth, continually hitting one step with the ball of her stretched slipper, her fez and corals reflected as a blotch of florid red in the gold; then she bent aside and drank wine from the gold Javan goblet which I had brought from the temple of Boro Budor, her head covered by it; then, the little hairs at her lip-corners still wet, says she: "Vices and climes, climes and vices, always the same. But was that the point? The point was their cleverness—to find out what water is made of—to fly on those things—what a pletty, witty thing a ship is!—to find out that the atmosphere of Mars has more oxygen than ours—to talk across the continents—how inspired! If they were clever enough for all that, in time they would been clever enough to find out how to live together. What were these climes and vices?"

"Robberies of a hundred sorts, murders of—"

"What made them *do* them?"

"Their lubber souls."

"But *you* are of them, *I* am, yet you and I live here together, and do no vices and climes."

Her astonishing shrewdness! "No," I said, "we lack *motive*. There is no danger that we should hate each other, for we have plenty of dates, wines, and thousands of things—our danger is rather the other way: but *they* hated because they were numerous, and there arose among them a question of dates and wine."

"Was there not enough land to glow dates and wine for all?"

"There was—yes: much more than enough; but some got hold of lots of it, and, as the rest felt the pinch of scarcity, there arose a pretty state of things—including the dullness and commonness, the vices and crimes."

"Ah, but then," says she, "it was not to their bad souls that the vices and climes were due, but to this question of land. If there had been no such question, there could have been no vices and climes, since you and I, who are just like them, do no vices and climes here, where there is no such question."

The limelight of her mind! Right into the heart of a matter does her wit drive quick.

"That may be so," I said: "but there *was* that question of land, as there always must be where millions with varying degrees of greed and luck and cunning live together."

"Oh, not necessarily!" she cried pressingly: "not at all, since there is more land than enough: for, if there should spling up more men now, and they, having the expelience of the past at their hand, made an allangement among themselves that the first who tlied to take more than he could work should be sent to dleam a nonsense-dleam, the question could never again alise!"

It arose before—it would arise again."

"But no! I can guess how it alose before: the land was at first so vely, vely much more than enough for all, that the first men did not take the tlouble to make an allangement among themselves: and afterwards the habit of carelessness was confirmed; until at last the vely olliginal carelessness must have come to have the look of an allangement. But now, if more men would spling, they would be taught—"

"Ah, but no more men will *spling,* you see—!"

She was silent awhile; then: "There is no telling; I sometimes feel as if they must, and shall: the tlees bloom, the thunder lolls, the air makes me lun and leap, the glound is full of fluitfulness, and I hear the voice of the Lord God walking

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all among the tlees of the gleat folests."

As she uttered this, I could see her under-lip push out askew and shiver, as when she is nigh to crying, and her eyes spring liquid; but in a moment more she looked at me full and smiled, so mobile is her countenance; and, as she looked, it suddenly struck me what a noble structure of a brow the creature owns, almost pointed at the uplifted summit, and broadening down bell-shaped in strings of frizzy hair, which anon she shakes away with her head.

"But I *told* you, didn't I, that no more men will spring? You know that the earth produced men by an eternal process, commencing with a low type of life, and cumulatively developing it, till at last a man stood up; but that can never occur again: for the earth is old, and has lost her evolving fervours now. So talk no more of men *splinging,* and of things which you do not understand. Instead, go inside—stay, I will tell you a secret: to-day in the wood I plucked some musk-roses and wound them into a wreath, and it lies now on the pearl tripod in the third room to the right: go, therefore, and put it on, and bring the harp, and play to me, my dear."

On which she ran quick with a little cry of delight; and coming again, sat garlanded, incarnadine within the flushing depths of the gold, nor did I send her home to her lonesome yali till the moon, subdued and pallid now from all-night beatitudes, sank down soft within purples, quilts of curdling pearl, to the Hesperian realms of her rest.

So sometimes we speak together, she and I, she and I.

* * *

That ever I should write such a thing! I am driven out from Imbros!

I was strolling in a wood yesterday up to the west—a clear evening, the sun just set, the book in which I write in my hand, for I had thought of making a sketch of an old windmill to the northwest, to show her. Twenty minutes previously she had been with me, for I had chanced to meet her, and she had come, but had kept darting on ahead after nuts, gathering armfuls of amaranth, nenuphar, red asphodel, till, weary of my life, I had called to her: "Go away! out of my sight," whereupon she, pushing her underlip toward crying, had walked off.

Well, I was going on in my stroll, when I seemed to feel some quaking of the gound, and before one could count twenty, it was as if the land was bent upon wracking itself to fragments; so in a great scare I set to running, calling in the direction in which she had gone, staggering as on the deck of some labouring craft, tumbling, gathering myself up, running again, the air full of uproar, the land waving like the ocean; and, as I went plunging, little knowing whither, I saw to my left some four roods of forest droop and sink into a ravine which opened to receive them; upon which up I cast my arms, crying out "God! save the girl!", and a minute later rushed out, to my surprise, into open space on a hill-side, whence I could see the palace below, and, beyond it, a wisp of white sea that had the appalling aspect of being higher than the land. Down the hill-side I stumbled, driven by the impulse to flee somewhither, but about half way down was afresh startled by a shrill pattering like musical hail, and in two moments more the palace plunged down with the jangling and clatter of a thousand bells of gold into the bosom of the lake.

Some seconds after this the commotion, having lasted fully ten minutes, commenced to lull. . . . I found her an hour later standing among the ruins of her yali.

* * *

What a thing! Probably every building on the island has been destroyed; the palace-platform, all cracked, lies tilted, half-sunken awy into the lake, like an ark stranded, while of the palace no trace remains, except a mound of gold-stones emerging above the lake's surface to the south, gone, gone—sixteen years of vanity and vexation. But, from a practical point of view, the direst calamity of all is that the *Speranza* now lies high-and-dry in the village, she having been bodily picked up from the quay by the tidal-wave, and driven bow-foremost into a street not half her width; and there now lies, looking huge enough in the little village, wedged for ever, smashed-in at the nip like a match-box, a most astonishing spectacle: her bows forty feet up the street, ten feet above the ground at the stem, rudder resting on the quay, foremost tilted forward, and that bottom which has roamed through seas so remote ambushed in a polychrome of sea-weeds, the old *Speranza;* but, as her steps were there, and by a leap I could catch them underneath

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and go up hand-over-hand, till I got foothold, this I did at ten the same evening when the sea-water had drained back from the land, leaving everything swampy; she there with me, and presently following me upon the ship.

Most things I found cracked into fragments, twisted, disfigured out of recognition; the house-walls themselves displaced a little at the nip; the bow of the cedar skiff smashed in to her middle against the galley; and, but for the fact that the air-pinnace had not broken from her heavy ropings, and one of the compasses still whole, I do not know what I should have done: for those four old boats that had been in the cove have completely disappeared.

I made her sleep on the cabin-floor amid the *débris* of everything, I sleeping high up in a wood to the west, and I write now lying in the long-grass the morning after, the sun rising, though I cannot see him. My plan for today is to cut four logs with the saw, lay them on the ground by the ship, lower the pinnance upon them, roll her down into the water, and by nightfall bid a long farewell to Imbros, which drives me out in this way. Still, I look forward with pleasure to our hour's run to the Mainland, when I shall teach her to steer by compass, and manipulate liquid-air, as I have taught her to talk, to cook, to experiment, to write, to think, to live: for she is my creation, this creature, as it were a "rib from my side."

But the "design" of this expulsion, if there are "designs"? and what was it that she called it last night?—"this new going out from Halan!", this "Haran," it appears, being the place from which "Ablaham" went out, when "called" by God.

* * *

Apparently we felt only the tail of the earthquake at Imbros, for it has broken up Turkey! and we poor helpless creatures put down here in the theatre of these distractions, it is too bad, for the rages of Nature at present are just amazing, and what it may come to I do not know. When we came to the Macedonian coast in moonlight we sailed along it, and up the Dardanelles, looking out for village, yali, or any habitation where we might put up: but everything wrecked, Kilid-Bahr, Chanak-Kaleh, Gallipoli, Lapsaki in ruins. At Lapsaki I landed, leaving her in the boat, and picked my way a little inward, but soon went back with the news that not even a bazaar-arch was left standing whole, in most parts even the line of the streets being obliterated, for the place had tumbled like a house of dice, and had then been shaken up and jumbled. Finally we slept in a forest on the other side of the strait, beyond Gallipoli, taking our few provisions, and having to wade at some points through morass two feet deep before we arrived at dry woodland.

In this forest the following morning I sat alone—for we had slept separated by half a mile—thinking out the question of whither I should go: my choice would have been to remain either in the region where I was, or to go Eastward; but the region where I was presented no dwelling that I could see; to go any distance Eastward I needed a ship, and of ships I had seen during the night only wrecks, nor did I know where to find one anywhere in this country: I was thus, like her "Ablaham," directed Westward.

In order, then, to go Westward, I first went further Eastward, once more entered the Golden Horn, once more went up those scorching Seraglio steps. Here what the wantonness of man had spared the wantonness of Nature had destroyed, for the few houses that I had left standing round the upper part of Pera I now saw as low as the rest; also the house near the Suleimanieh, where we had lived our first days, to which I now returned as to a home, I found without a pillar standing; and that night she slept under the half-roof of a little funeral kiosk in the scorched cypress-wood of Eyoub, and I a mile off, at the verge of the forest in which first I saw her.

The following morning, on meeting, as agreed, at the spot of the Prophet's mosque, we passed together through the valley and cemetery of Kassim, by the quagmires up to Pera, all the landscape having to me a twisted unfamiliar aspect. We had determined to employ the morning in searching for supplies among the earthquake-ruins of Pera; and, as I had decided to collect enough in one day to save us further pains for some time, we passed hours in this task, I confining myself to the white house in the part overlooking Kassim, where I had once slept, losing myself amid the obliquities of its floors, roofs, wall fragments, she going to the Mussulman quarter of Djianghir near, on the heights of Taxim, where were many shops, and thence round the brow of the hill to the French Embassy-house overlooking Foundoucli and the sea, both of us having carpet-bags, and all within the air

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of that wilderness of break-up that morning a strong, permanent perfume of maple-blossom.

We met toward evening, she quivering under such a load, I would not let her carry it, but abandoned my day's labour, which was lighter, and took hers, which was quite enough; and we went back westward, prying the while for some shelter from the drenching night-dews of this place, but nothing could find, till we came again, quite late, to her broken funeral-kiosk at the entrance to the immense cemetery-avenue of Eyoub. There without a word I turned from her, leaving her among the wrecked catafalques, for I was weary, but, having gone some distance, turned back, thinking that I might take some more raisins from the bag; and, after getting them, I said to her, shaking her little hand where she sat under the roof-shadow on a stone: "Good-night, Borgia."

She did not reply promptly: and her reply, to my surprise, was a protest against her name, for a rather sulky, yet gentle, voice came from the darkness, saying: "Am *I* a poisoner?"

"Well," I said, "all right, tell me whatever you like that I should call you, and henceforth I will call you that."

"Call me Eve," says she.

"Well, no," I said, "not Eve, anything but that: for *my* name is Adam, and we do not wish to be ridiculous in each other's eyes; but I will call you anything else that you like."

"Call me Leda," says she.

"And why Leda?" said I.

"I saw 'Leda' in a book, and liked it."

"Well, then," I said "Leda it shall be, for I like it, too, and you ought to have a name beginning with an 'L.'. Good-night, my dear sleep well, and dream, dream."

"And to you too, may God give dleams of peace and pleasantness," says she; and I went.

And it was only when I had lain myself on brake for my bed, my head on my caftan, a brook's babbling for my lullaby, and two stars, which alone of the skyful I could spy, for my night-lights, and only when my eyes were already closed toward slumber, that a sudden strong thought wrought and woke me: for I remembered that Leda was the name of a Greek girl who had conceived twins. In fact, I should not be surprised if this "Leda" is the same as "Eve," for all languages were connected at bottom, I have heard of *v's* interchanging in this way with *b's*, even with *d's*, and if *Di*, meaning God, or Light, and *Bi*, meaning Life, and Iove and Ihovah and God, meaning much the same, are all one; and where it says "truly the Light is Good (*tob, bon*)," this is as if it said "truly the Di is Di." Such, at any rate, is the fatality that tracks me, even in little things: for this Western Eve, or Greek Leda, had twins. . . .

* * *

Well, the next morning we moved through the ruins of Greek Phanar and across the triple Stamboul wall, which still shewed its ivied portal, to make our way, not without climbing, along the Golden Horn to the foot of the Old Seraglio, where I soon came across traces of the railway; and that minute commenced our journey across Turkey, Bulgaria, Servia, Bosnia, Croatia, to Trieste, occupying no day or two as in old times, but four months, a prolonged nightmare, though a nightmare of pleasance, if one may say so, leaving on the memory an immense impression of ravines, ever-succeeding profundities and greatnesses, jungle strange as some moon-struck poet's fantasy, everlasting glooms, and a grieving of unseen rivers, cataracts, and slow cumbered brooks whose bulrushes never behold any ray of sun or moon, with largesse, everywhere, secrecies, profusions, the unspeakable, the unimaginable, a savagery most lush and fierce and showy, and valleys of Arcadie, remote mountain-peaks towering, and tarns gnome-guarded like old-buried treasure, and glaciers, and we two human folk pretty small and drowned and lost in all that houselessness, yet moving always through it.

We followed the rails that first day till we came to a train, of which I found the engine good enough, and everything necessary to move it at my hand, but the metals in such a condition of twisted, broken, vaulted, buried mêlée from the earthquake, that, having run some hundreds of yards to examine them, I determined that nothing could be done in that way—a thing that at first threw me into a state like despair, for what we were to do I did not know; but after persevering on foot during three days over the track, which is of that large-gauge type of Eastern Europe, I began to see that, deep-rusted as it was, there were considerable bits still good, and took heart.

I had with me land-charts and compass, but nothing for taking altitude-observations, for *Speranza* instruments, ex-

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cept one compass, had all been broken-up by her shock; however, on getting to the town of Silivri, about forty miles from our start, I saw among the ruins of a bazaar-shop a number of brass objects, and found sextants, quadrants, theodolites; two mornings after which we came upon an engine in mid-country, with coals in it, a stream near, the machinery serviceable, as I found after an hour's inspection, having examined the boiler with a candle through the manhole, but red with rust, and the connecting-rod in particular so frail-looking, that, though I had a goat-skin of almond-oil, I felt very dubious: I ventured, however; and, except for some leakage at the tubulure which led the steam to the valve-chest, all went so well, that, at a pressure never exceeding three atmospheres, we travelled nearly a hundred miles before being stopped by a head-to-head block on the line, when we had to abandon our engine. We then continued another nine miles a-foot, I all the time mourning my motor, which I had had to leave at Imbros, and hoping at every town-let to see a whole one, but in vain.

* * *

It was wonderful to see the villages and towns reverting to the earth, already invaded by vegetation, scarcely any more breaking the continuity of "nature," the town now as much the country as the country, and that which is not-man becoming all in all with a certain furore of robustness. A whole day among the southern gorges of the Balkan Mountains the train-engine went tearing its way through many a mile of bindweed tendrils, an interminable curtain, burning with flowers of great size, but sombre as the shades of night, rather resembling jungles of Java and the Filipinas; and she that day, lying in the one carriage behind, where I had made her a little yatag-bed from Tatar Bazardjik, continually played the kittur, barely touching the strings, and crooning low, low, in her contralto, everlastingly the same air, over and over anew, crooning, crooning, some moody tune composed out of her own soul's music, just audible to me through the monotony of the engine's slow toiling, until I was drunken with so sweet a woe, my God, a woe that was sweet as swooning, and a dolour that lulled like sleep, and a grief that soothed like peace, so sweet, so sweet, that all that tangle of wood and gloom lost locality and actualness for me, and became nothing but a spellbound and pensive Heaven for her to moan and lullaby in; and from between my fingers streamed plenteous tears that day, and all that I could keep on mourning was "O Leda, O Leda, O Leda," till my heart was near to break.

The strap of the eccentric of this engine, which was very poor and flaky, suddenly snapped at a pin near five in the afternoon, so I had to stop in a fright; and now that invisible mechanism which had crooned and crooned about my ears in the air, and had followed me whithersoever I went, stopped, too, as down she jumped, calling out: "Well, I had a plesentiment that something would happen, and I am glad for I was tired!"

Seeing that nothing could be done with the eccentric-strap, I got down, took the bag, and, parting before us the continuous screen we went pioneering to the left between a rock-cleft, stepping over rocks that seemed black with moss-growths: no sight of sky through hundreds of feet of leafage overhead; and everywhere profusions of ferneries burdened with dews, rebellions of dishevelled maiden-hairs among mimosas which had a large leaf, with wild vine, white briony, and an odour of cedar, and a soft gushing of waters which informed all that gloaming.

The way led upward three hundred feet; and presently, after some windings, and the climbing of five great steps almost regular, yet natural, the gorge opened in a roundish gap, forty feet across, with overhanging crags nine hundred feet on high; and there, behind a screen which fell from the heights, its tendrils defined and straight like a bead-hanging, we spread the store of foods, I opening the fruits, vegetables, meats, wines, she arranging them among the gold-plate, lighting both the spirit-lamp and the lantern, for here it was quite dark.

The light revealed behind the screen of tendrils a green cave in the crag, and at the cave's opening a pool two yards wide, black but pellucid, which leisurely wheeled, discharging a streamlet that came out from the cave: and in it I saw four owl-eyed fish, a finger long, loiter, and instigate themselves, and gaze. So there we ate and lingered, until Leda, after smoking a cigarette, said that now she would go and "lun," and went, and left me glooming: for she is the sun and the moon and the host of Heaven; I occupying myself that night in making the calendar at the end of this book—for my almanack was lost with the palace—mak-

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With a malign and sullen eye
askance, I watched her there. . . .

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ing a calendar, counting the days in my head, but counting them across my thoughts of her.

Then she came again to tell me good-night, and went down to the train to bed; while I, putting out the light, stooped within the cave, and, spreading my bed beside the rivulet, slept.

But an uneasy sleep: for soon I woke; and a long while I lay awake, conscious of a dripping at one spot in the cave, which at a minute's interval darkly splashed, regularly, seeming to grow ever louder, sadder, and the splash was "Leesha," but it became "Leda" to my ears, and it sobbed her name, until I pitied myself, so sad I was. And when I could no longer bear the anguish of the splash and the spasm of its sobbing, I got up to go, soft, soft, lest she should hear in that muteness of the hushed gloom, going more slow, more soft, as I moved more near, a sob stuck in my gullet, my feet leading me to her; till I touched the coach, against which through a long hour I leant my brow, the sob aching within my throat, she all mixed up in my head with the suspended night, and with the elfin hosts in the air that made the silence so vocal to the vacant eardrum, and with that dripping that grieved within the cave; and gradually I touched her hair with my lips, and near to her ear I said, for she breathed as if in sleep, "Leda, I have come to you, for I could not help it, Leda: and oh, my heart is full of the love of you, for you are mine, and I am yours; and to live with you, till we die, and after we are dead to be near you still, Leda, with my broken heart near your heart.

I must have sobbed, I think: for, as I spoke close to her ear with dying eyes of love, I was startled by a break in her breathing, and in wary haste I closed the door and quite back to the cave I stole in haste.

And the next morning when we met I thought—but am not now sure—that she smiled singularly: I thought so. She may, she *may*, have heard— But I cannot tell.

* * *

Twice I was obliged to abandon engines in consequence of forest-tree blockages right across the line, which, do what I might, I could not move, these being the two bitterest incidents of the pilgrimage; and at least twenty times I changed from engine to engine, when other trains obstructed. As for the extent of the earthquake, it is pretty certain that it was universal within the Peninsula, and at many points exhibited superlative violence: for up to the time that we entered upon Servian territory we occasionally came upon stretches of the rails so dislocated, that it was impossible to continue upon them; nor during the whole course did I encounter a house or castle intact; and thrice, where the ground was of a kind to allow of it, I left the rags of metals, and made the engine travel the ground till I came upon other metals, when I always contrived to drive it upon them.

It was all very leisurely: for not everywhere, nor every day, could I get a nautical observation; and, having at all times to drive at low pressures for fear of tube and boiler weakness, crawling through tunnels, and stopping when darkness came on, we did not advance fast, nor particularly cared to.

Once moreover, for two days, and once for four, we were overtaken by storms of an inclemency so vast, that no thought of travelling entered our heads, our only care being to conceal our cowering bodies as deeply as possible. Once I passed through a town (Adrianople) doubly devoured, once by the arson of my own arm, and once by Nature: and I made haste to put that place behind me.

Finally, three months and twenty days from the date of the earthquake, having traversed only 900 miles, I let go in the Venice lagoon on the morning of the 10th of September the lateen sail and stone anchor of a Maltese *speronare* which I had found, and partially cleaned, at Trieste; and thence passed up the Canalazzo in a gondola; for I said to Leda "In Venice will I pitch my patriarch tent."

But to will and to do are not the same thing, and still more Westward was I driven: for some of the stagnant canals of this place are now miasmas of pestilence, and within two days I was rolling with fever in the Old Procurazie Palace, she standing in pallid astonishment near me, sickness a novel thing to her; and, indeed, this was my first illness since my twentieth year when I had overworked, and went on a tour to Constantinople. I could not move from bed for a fortnight, but fortunately did not lose my senses, she bringing me the whole pharmacopoeia from the shops, from which to choose my medicines; and, divining the cause of this illness, though not a sign of it came near *her*, as soon as my knees could bear me I anew set out, ever Westward, enjoying now a certain luxury in travelling in compari-

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son with that Turkish difficulty, for here were no twisted metals, more and better engines, in the cities as many motors as I chose, and Nature markedly less savage.

I do not know why I did not stop at Verona or Brescia, or some other neighborhood of the Italian lakes, since I was fond of water; but I had, I think, the thought in my head to travel back to Vauclaire in France, where I had lived, and there live: for I thought that she might like those old monks. At all events, we did not remain long in any place till we came to Turin, where we spent nine days, she in the house facing mine; and after that, at her own suggestion, we went on still, passing by train into the valley of the Isere, and then into that of the Rhone, until we came to the old town of Geneva among mountains peaked with snow, the town seated at the head of a lake made in the shape of the crescent moon, and, like the moon, a thing of much beauty and many moods, suggesting a being under the spell of charms and magics. However, with this idea of Vauclaire still in my head, we left Geneva in a motor at four in the afternoon of the 17th of May, I intending to get to the town called Bourg about eight; but by some chance for which I cannot to this hour account (unless the rain was the reason), I missed the road marked in the chart, which should have been fairly level, and found myself on mountain-tracks, unaware of my whereabouts, while darkness fell, and a downpour of rain that had something of a sullen venom drowned us.

I stopped often, peering about for château, châlet, or village, but none did I see, though I thrice came upon railway-lines; and not until midnight did I run down a rather steep pass upon the shore of a lake, which, from its apparent vastness in the moonless obscurity, I could only presume to be the great lake once again, three hundred yards to our left being visible through the rain a building apparently risen out of the lake, looking ghostly livid, for it was of white stone, not high, but big, an old thing of complicated turrets (their whiteness roofed with maroon candle-extinguishers), oddities of Gothic nooks, and window-slits, like a fanciful picture.

Round to this we drove, drowned as rats, she sighing and bedraggled, to find a spit of land projecting into the lake, on which we left the car, walked forward along it with the bag, crossed a tiny drawbridge, and so got to the islet of rocks on which the castle stands. On finding an open portal, we then went investigating the place, quite gay at the shelter, everywhere lighting candles which we saw in iron scones: so that, as the castle is far seen from the shores of the lake, it would have looked to one watching thence a place suddenly possessed and haunted. Having found beds and slept there, the next day we found it to be the Castle of Chillon; and there we remained five happy months, till again, again, Fate overtook us.

* * *

The morning after our coming we had breakfast—our last meal together—on the first floor in a pentagonal room entered from a lower level by three steps, an oak table in it pierced by a multitude of tunnels, worm-eaten, with three chairs having backs two yards high, an oak desk covered still with papers, arras on the walls, three dark oil-paintings, and a grandfather's clock. This room is at the middle of the château, and contains two oriels looking upon the lake, upon an islet containing four trees in a jungle of flowers, upon the lake's shore, interrupted by the mouths of a river which proved to be the Rhone, upon a snowy town on the slopes which proved to be Villeneuve, and upon the mountains back of Bouveret and St. Gingolph—all having the astonished air of a resurrection just accomplished, everything fresh washed in dyes of azure, ultramarine, indigo, snow, emerald, that fresh morning, so that one had to call it the best and holiest place in the world. These five room-walls, and oak floor, and two oriels, became specially mine, though it was really common-ground to us both, and there I would do many little things, the papers on the desk telling that it had been the *bureau* of one R. E. Gaud, "*Grand Bailli*," whose residence the place may have been.

She asked me while eating that morning to stay here, and I said I would see, though with misgiving: so together we went about the house, and, finding it unexpectedly spacious, I consented to stay, at both ends being suites, little rooms, infinitely quaint and cozy, with heavy furniture Henri Quatre, and bed-draperies; and there are separate, and as it were secret, stairs for exit to each suite, spirals, so we decided that she should have the suite overlooking the length of the lake, the mouths of the Rhone, Bouveret and Villeneuve, and I should have that overlooking the spit of land behind, the drawbridge, the shore-

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cliffs, and the elm-wood which comes down to the shore, giving a glimpse of the village of Chillon; and, that decided, I took her hand in mine, and I said: "Well, then, here we stay, under the same roof—for the first time. Leda, I will not explain why, but it is dangerous; so much, that it *may* mean the death of one or other of us: deadly dangerous, my poor girl, believe me, for I know it. Well, this being so, you must never come near my part of the house, nor I near yours.

"Lately we have been much together, but, then, we have been active, full of purpose and occupation; here we shall be nothing of the kind, I can see: so we must live perfectly separate lives. You do not understand—but things are so. You are nothing to me, really, nor I to you, only we live on the same earth, which is nothing—a chance: so your own food, clothes, everything, you will procure for yourself—perfectly easy—the shores crowded with mansions, castles, towns; and I the same. The motor down there I set apart for your use: I will get another; and I will look you up a boat and fishing-tackle, and cut a cross on the bow of yours, so that you may never use mine. All this is very necessary: you cannot dream, but I know, how much. Do not run any risks in climbing, now, or with the motor, or in the boat . . . Leda. . . ."

I saw her under-lip push, and went away in haste, for I did not care whether she cried or not. In that Balkan voyage, and in my illness at Venice, she had become too near and dear to me, my tender love, my dear darling soul; and I said in my heart: "I will be a decent being; I will turn out trumps."

* * *

Under this castle is a sort of dungeon in which are seven pillars, and an eighth half-built into the wall, one of them worn away by some prisoner, or prisoners, once chained to a ring in it, and in this pillar the name "Byron" inscribed—which made me remember that a poet so named had written something about this place; and two days afterward I actually came upon the poet in a room containing books, many of them English, near the Grand Bailli's *bureau*: so I read the poem, which is named "The Prisoner of Chillon," and found it affecting, the description good—only I saw no seven rings, and where he speaks of the "pale and livid light," he should speak rather of the dun and the brownish gloom, for the word "light" disconcerts the fancy here, and of either pallor or blue there is there no sign.

However, I was so struck by the horror of man's atrocity to man, as depicted in this poem, that I resolved that she should see it: so went straight to her rooms with the book, and, she being away, ferreted among her things to see what she was doing, finding everything very tidy, except in one room where were a number of prints called *La Mode,* and *débris* of snipped cloth, and medley.

When two hours later she came in and I suddenly presented myself, *"Oh!"* she let slip, then fell to cooing her laugh; and now I took her down through a large room stacked with every kind of rifle, with revolvers, cartridges, swords, bayonets—some cantonal magazine— then-in the dungeon showed her the worn stone, the ring, the slits in the thickness of the wall, and told all the story of ferocity; while the splashing of the lake upon the rock outside came in with a strange and tragic sound, and her mobile face became all one sorrow.

Then, "How lude and clude they must have been!" cries she with a tremulous lip, her face reddened with indignation.

"Brutes," I said: "it is not surprising if brutes were cruel."

And in the time while I said this she was looking up at me with a smile. "Some others came and set the plisoner flee!"

"Yes," I said, "they did, but— Yes, that was all right, so far as it went."

"And it was time when men had al-leady become cluel thlough lack of land," says she: "if those who set him flee were so kind when the lest were cluel, what would they have been at a time when the lest were kindly? They would have been just like angels . . . !"

* * *

At this place fishing and rambling were the order of the day, both for her and for me, especially fishing, though a week rarely passed which did not see me at Bouveret, St. Gingolph, Yvoire, Messery, Nyon, Ouchy, Vevey, Montreux, Geneva, or one of the two dozen villages, townlets, towns, that crowd the shores, all very pretty places, each with its charm; mostly I went on foot, though the railway runs right round the forty miles of the lake's length; and one noon-day I was walking through the mainstreet of Vevey, going on to the Cully-road, when I had an awful shock: for from a shop just in front of me

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to the right there came a sound—an unmistakable indication of life—a clattering, as of metals rattled together; whereat my heart bounded into my mouth, I was conscious of becoming bloodlessly pale, and on tip-toe of exquisite caution I stole up to the open door—peeped in—and it was *she*, standing on the counter of a jeweller's shop, her back toward me, her head bent down over a tray of jewels in her hands, which she was rummaging for something.

I went *"Hoh!"* for I could not help it: and that whole day, till sunset, we were very dear friends, for I could not part from her, we walking together by voralpen, wood, and shore all the way to Ouchy, she like a creature crazy that day with the bliss of living, rolling in grasses and down flowery slopes, stamping her foot challengingly at me, superb ruler of Earth that she is, then rushing like mad for me to catch her, with laughter, *abandon*, brazen railleries, gaieties of the wild ass's foal on the hills, entangling her loosened hair with the tendrils and blooms of Bacchants, and quaffing, in the passage through Cully, more wine, I fancied, than was right: and the lightning-shocks that shot through me that day, and the rubious revelations of Beauty which my mind's eye sighted, and the pangs of white-hot honey that spanked me, and were too much for me, and made me sick—oh, Heaven, what pen could express any of that recondite realm of things? till, at Ouchy, with a wave of my arm I motioned her back from me, for I was dumb, and weak, and I went away, leaving her there; and all that long night her might was upon me, for she is stronger than gravitation, which may be evaded, than all the forces of nature in combination, and the sun and the moon are nothing compared with her; and when she was no more with me I was like a fish in the air, or like a beast in the deep, for she is my element to breathe in, and I drown without her: so that for hours I lay on that wood-lane mounting to the burial-ground outside Ouchy that night, like a man sore wounded, biting the grass.

What made things horrider for me was her adoption of European clothes since coming to this place. I think that, in her adroit way, she herself made her dresses: for one day I noticed in her rooms some "fashion-plates," with a confusion like dress-making; or she may have been only modifying costumes from the shops, for her Western dressing is not quite like what I remember of the modern style, but is really, I believe, her own *goût*, nearer resembling the old Greek, or the "Empire."

At any rate, the airs and graces are not less natural to her than plumage to parrots; and she has changes like the moon, never twice the same, and ever transcending her last phase and revelation: for I could never have imagined anyone in whom *taste* was a faculty so separate as in her, so positive and prominent, like smelling or sight—more like *smelling*: for it is the faculty, half Reason, half Imagination, by which she fore-scents precisely what will wed exquisitely with what, so that every time I see her I receive the impression of a perfectly novel, completely bewitching, work of Art, the quality of works of Art being to produce the momentary conviction that anything else whatever could not possibly be so good.

Occasionally from my window I would see her in the wood beyond the drawbridge, cool and white in the shade, with her Bible probably or chemistry-book, trailing her train like a court-lady, looking taller than before; and I believe that this new dressing produced a separation between us more complete than it might have been: for especially after that day between Vevey and Ouchy I was careful not to meet her; and the more I noted that she bejewelled herself, powdered herself, embalmed herself in pouncings of nard and sachets of scents, chapleted her head, the more I shunned her. Myself, somehow, had now resumed European dress, and, ah me, was greatly changed, God knows, from the portly monarch-being that had strutted and moaned four years before in the palace at Imbros, so that my manner of being and thought might once more now have been called "modern."

All the more was my sense of responsibility awful: and from day to day it seemed to intensify, a voice never ceasing to remonstrate within me nor leaving me peace, the malediction of unborn billions appearing to menace me; and to strengthen my fixity I would often overwhelm myself, and her, with names of scorn, calling myself "convict," her "lady-bird," asking what manner of man was I that I should dare so great a thing, and, as for her, what was she, to be the Mother of a host?—a butterfly with a woman's brow! and frequently now in my fiercer hours I was meditating either my death—or hers.

Ah, but the butterfly did not let me forget her brow! To the southwest of Villeneuve, between the forest and the river, is a field of gentian, and, returning from round St. Gingolph to the Château

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one day in the third month, I saw, as I turned a corner in the descent of the mountain, some object floating in the air above the field. Never was I more startled, or more perplexed: for I could see nothing to account for the object soaring there like a great butterfly, though I was soon able to come to the conclsion that she has reinvented *the kite,* and presently sighted her holding the string in the mid-field. Her invention resembles the kind called "swallow-tail" of old.

* * *

But mostly it was on the lake that I saw her, for there we mainly lived, and occasionally there were guilty approaches and *rencontres,* she in her boat, I in mine, both slight clinker-built pleasure-boats of Montreux which I had spent some days in overhauling and varnishing: mine having jib, fore-and-aft mainsail, and spanker; hers rather smaller, one masted, with an easy-running lug-sail. It was no uncommon thing for me to sail quite to Geneva, and come back from a seven-days' cruise with my soul inflated and consoled with the lake and its many moods of smiling and darksome, flighty and pensive, dolorous, despairing, tragic, at morning, at noon, at sunset, at midnight: a panorama that never for a moment rested from unrolling its tranformations, I sometimes climbing the mountains as high as the goatherd region of hoch-alpen, once sleeping there; and once I was made ill by a two-weeks' horror which I had: for she disappeared in her skiff, I being at the Château, and did not come back; while she was away there was a gale that changed the lake into an angered ocean, and, ah, my good God, she did not come; till at last, half-crazy at the vacant days of care which rolled by and by, and she did not come, I set out upon a wild-goose quest of her—of all hopeless things the most hopeless, for the globe is great—and I did not find her: so after three days I turned back, recognising that I was mad to search the infinite; and, coming nigh the Château, I saw her wave her handkerchief from the island-edge, for she had divined that I had gone to ferret for her, and was watching for me: and when I took her hand, what did she say to me, the Biblical simpleton? "Oh, you of little faith!" says she; and, since she had adventures to lisp, with the *r's* liquefied into *l's,* I was with her that day again.

Once a month perhaps she would knock at my outermost door, which I kept locked when at home, to present me a red trout or grayling sumptuously dressed, which I had not the heart to reject; and exquisitely she does them, all hot and spiced, applying to their preparation that taste which she supplies to dress; nor did her luck in angling fail to supply her with the finest specimens, though, for that matter, this lake, with its old fish-hatcheries and fish-ladders, is not stingy in that way, swarming now with the choicest lake-trout, river-trout, red trout, and with salmon, of which last I have brought in one with the landing-net of perhaps forty pounds.

As the bottom goes off rapidly from the islands to a depth of nine hundred feet, we did not long confine ourselves to bottom-fishing, but advanced to every variety of manoeuvre, doing middle-water spinning with three-triangle flights and sliding lip-hook for jack and trout, trailing with the sail for salmon, live-baiting with the float for pike, daping with blue-bottles, casting with artificial flies; and I could not say in which she became the most carelessly adept, for each soon seemed as old and natural to her as a handicraft learned from birth.

* * *

On the 21st of October I attained my forty-sixth birthday in excellent health: a day destined to end for me in bloodshed and tragedy, alas. I forget now what had caused me to mention the date, long beforehand, in, I think, Venice, not dreaming that she would keep any count of it, nor was I even sure that my calendar was not inaccurate by a day; but at ten in the morning of what I called the 21st, descending by my private spiral in flannels with some trout and par bait and tackle—I met her coming up, my God, though she had no right to be there; and with her cooing murmur, yet pale, pale, and with a most guilty look, she presents me a big bouquet of flowers.

I was at once thrown into a state of agitation. She was dressed in a frippery of *mousseline* all cream-laced, with short sleeves that hung wide, a diamond at her open chest, the ivory-brown of which looked browner for the powdery bluish-white of her face, where, however, the freckles were not quite whited out, on her feet slippers of silk, pink, without any stockings—a pink pale to fainting, her hair nipped by a ring of gold, and she smelled like Heaven, God knows.

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I could not speak. It was she who broke a painful silence, saying, very faint and pale: "It is the day!"

"I—perhaps—" I said, some incoherency like that; and I saw the touch of enthusiasm which she had summoned up quenched by my manner, she presently asking: "I have not done long again?"—looking down, breaking another silence.

"No, no, oh, no," I hurriedly said—"not done wrong again. Only—I could not suppose that you would count up the days. You are . . . considerate. Perhaps—but—"

"Tell Leda?"

"Perhaps . . . I was going to say . . . you might come fishing with me . . ."

"O, luck!" she went softly.

I was pierced by a sense of my cowardice, my incredible weakness; but I could not at all help it.

So I took the flowers, down we went to the south shore to my boat, from the well of which I threw out some of the fish, arranged the tackle, the stern-cushions for her, got up the sails; and out we went, she steering, I in the bow, with every possible inch of interval between, receiving delicious whiffs from her ambergris, frangipane, some imbroglio of fragrances, the morning warm, little whiffs of wind on the water, which was mottled, like water ill-mingled with indigo-wash, we making little headway: so it was some time before I moved near to her to get the par for fixing on the three-triangle flight, for I was going to trail for salmon or big lake-trout; and all that time nothing at all was said; but then I said: "Who told you that flowers are proper to birthdays? or that birthdays are of any importance?"

To which she answered: "I suppose that nothing can happen so important as birth; and perfumes were considered ploper to birth, because in the legend the wise men blought spices to the young Jesus."

This *naïveté* was the cause of my immediate recovery: for to laugh is to be saved; and I laughed out, saying; "But you read the Bible too much! You should read the modern books."

"Some I cannot lead," says she: "the people seem to have got so collupted; it makes me shudder."

"Well, now, you see, you come round to my point of view," I said.

"Yes, and no," says she: "they had got so *spoiled*, that is all—seem to have become quite dull-witted—the plainest tluths they could not see. I can imagine that those faculties which aided them in their stlain to become lich, and make the lest poor, must have been gleatly sharpened, while the other faculties withered: as I can imagine a person seeing double thlough one eye, and blind on the other side."

"They didn't *want* to see on the other side," I said: "there were some tolerably clear-sighted ones among them, you know; and these agreed in pointing out how, by changing one or two of their old arrangements of Bedlam, they could greatly better themselves: but they listened with listless ears, or sneered. For they had become more or less unconscious of their misery, especially the rich, so miserable were they —like the man in Byron's 'Prisoner of Chillon,' who, when his deliverers came, was indifferent, for he says:

'It was at length the same to me
Fettered or fetterless to be:
I had learned to love Despair.'"

"Oh, my God," she went, covering her face a moment, "how dleadful! And it seems tlue—they had learned to love despair, to be even ploud of despair. Yet, all the time, I can see, almost all of them were kind, and clever, too, except in the one eye where habit blinded them flom seeing the stars, as you only use one hand, by habit. Such a queer, unnatulal feeling it gives me to lead of those people, I can't desclibe it; their motives seem so slavish, tainted, their life so lopsided—tluly, the whole head was sick, the whole heart faint."

"Quite so," I said; 'and observe that this was no new thing: in the very beginning of your Bible you read how God saw that every imagination of man's heart is evil . . ."

"Oh, but none of that is tlue," she interrupted with a pout—"not tlue of the Polynesians, who, enjoying their land in common, lived in sinless gladness at this garden of God, till white slaves, debased by centulies of slavery, went to pleach to their betters, and to steal flom them—not tlue of you and me, whose hearts are not evil."

To this I answered: "Say yours; as to mine you know nothing, Leda."

The semicircles under her eyes had that morning, as often, often, a certain moist, heavy, pensive and weary something, very sweet and tender; and, looking softly at me with it, she answered: "Yes, I know my own heart, and it is not evil; not even in the least; and I know yours, too."

"Know mine!" I cried with half a laugh.

"Quite well," says she.

At which cool assurance of hers I was so

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disconcerted, that I answered not a word, but, going to her, handed her the baited flight, swivel-trace, and line, which she payed out; and I had got back again almost into the bows before I spoke again: "Well, this is news to me: you know all about my heart, it seems. Well, come, tell me what is in it!"

Now she was silent, pretending to be busy with the trail, until she said with her face bent, in a voice that I could just hear: "I will tell you: in it is a lebellion which you think good, but is not good. If a stleam will just flow, neither tlying to climb, nor overflowing its banks, but lunning within its channel whither What leads it leads it, it will leach the sea at last, and lose itself in fulness."

"Ah," I said, "but that counsel is not new—what the philosophers used to call 'yielding to Destiny,' 'following Nature'; and Destiny and Nature, I tell you, often led mankind quite wrong—"

"Or *seemed* to," says she—"for a time: as when a stleam wanders north a little, and the sea is south; but it is bound for the sea all the time, and will wind once more. Destiny never could, cannot yet, be judged, for it is not finished, and our lace should follow whither it points, certain that thlough a maze of curves it conducts the world to God, our Home."

"God our home indeed!" I cried, getting very excited: "girl! you talk speciously, but whence have you these thoughts? Girl! you talk of 'our race'! But there are only two of us left: Are you talking at me, Leda? Do not *I* follow Destiny?"

"You?" she sighed, her face bent down: "ah, poor me!"

"What should I do, if I followed it?" I queried with a crazy curiosity.

Her face hung lower, paler, in trouble; and she said: "You would come now and sit near me; you would not be there, you would be for ever near me . . ."

My good God! I felt my face redden. "Oh, I could not *tell* you . . . !" I cried: "You talk the most disastrous . . . ! you lack all responsibility . . . ! Never, never . . . !"

Her face was now covered with her left hand, her right on the tiller, and bitingly she replied with something of venom: "I could *make* you come near, if I chose; but I will not; I will wait upon my God."

"*Make* me!" I cried: "Leda! How?"

"I could cly before you, as I cly often and often . . . in seclet . . . for my children!"

"*You* do? This is news—children—!"

"Yes, I cly. Is not the burden of the world heavy upon me, too? and the work I have to do *vely, vely gleat?* And I cly in seclet, thinking of it . . ."

Now I saw the push and tortion and shiver of her poor little underlip, meaning tears, whereupon a flame rose in me beyond control, and I found myself in the act of rushing through the boat to catch her to me.

Midway, however, I was saved, when a whisper, intense as lightning, arrested me: "Forward is no escape, nor backward, but *sideward* there is a way!" and before I knew what I was doing, I was in the water swimming.

To the smaller of the islands, two hundred yards away, I swam, rested some minutes, and thence to the Castle. I did not look behind.

* * *

Well, from then till five in the afternoon I thought it all out, lying in my damp flannels on the sofa in the recess beside my bed, where it is dark behind the tattered scrap of arras: and what things I suffered that day, and what depths I sounded, and what prayers I prayed, God knows. What complicated the monstrous problem was this thought in my head: that to kill her would be more clement to her that to leave her alone, having killed myself: and, Heaven knows, it was for her alone that I thought, not at all for myself; but to kill her with my own hands—that was too hard to expect of a poor devil like me, a poor common son of Adam, after all, and never any sublime self-immolator, as four or five of them were. And hours I lay there with brows convulsed in an agony, groaning only this: "To kill her!" thinking sometimes that I should be clement to myself too, and let her live, and not care, since, after my death, I would not see her suffer, for the dead know not anything.

Yet that one or other of us must die was perfectly certain, for I knew that I was on the verge of failing in my oath, and that affairs here had reached a crisis: unless we could make up our minds to part . . .? putting the width of the earth between us: that concept occurred to me, and in the turmoil of my thoughts it seemed a possibility. Finally, about 5 p.m., I resolved upon something: and I leapt up, went down and across the house to the arsenal, chose a small revolver, fitted it with cartridges, took it upstairs, lubricated it with lamp-oil, went down and out across the drawbridge, walked two miles beyond the village, shot the revolver at a tree, found

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its action accurate, and so started back.

When I came to the Castle, I walked along the island to the outer end, and looked up: there were her prettly Valenciennes, put up by herself, waving inward before the lake-breeze at one oriel; and I knew that she was in the Castle, for I felt it: and ever when she was within I knew, for I felt her with me, and ever when she was away, I knew, I felt, for the air had a dreadful drought, and a fruitlessness, in it. And I looked up for some minutes to see if she would come to the window, then I called, and she appeared. And I said to her: "Come down here."

* * *

Just here is a rock-path down to the water between rocks mixed with tree-shrubs, three yards long: a path, or a lane, say, for at the lower end the rocks and tree-shrubs reach above one's head. There she had made fast my boat to a little linden: and gloomier now than Gethsemane that familiar boat looked to my gaze, for I knew very well that I would never enter it more, as I walked up and down the path, awaiting her; and from the jacket-pocket in which lay the revolver I drew a box of matches, took two matches, broke off a bit of one; and both I now held between thumb and forefinger, the phosphorous-ends level and visible, the other ends invisible: and I awaited her, pacing fast, and my brow was brutal as Azrael and Rhadamanthus.

She came, pretty pale, poor thing, and flurried, breathing fast. And "Leda," I said, meeting her in the middle of the lane, and going straight to the point, "we are to part, as you guess—for ever, as you guess: for I see very well that you guess. I too, am sorry, and heavy is my heart . . . to leave you . . . alone . . . But it must, aye, be done."

Her face suddenly went as sallow as the dead were, when the shroud was already on, and the coffin had become a commonplace by the bed-side; but in recording the fact, I record also this, that, accompanying this mortal sallowness, which wretchedly shewed up her poor freckles, was a smile, slightly down-drawn: a smile of steady, of disdainful—confidence.

She did not say anything: so I went on. "I have thought long, and have made a plan—which, however, cannot be effective without your consent and co-operation; and the plan is this: we go from this place together—this same night—to some unknown spot, some town, say a hundred miles hence—by train; there I get two motors, and I in one, you in the other, we go different ways; after which we shall never be able, however much we may want to, to rediscover each other in this wide world. That is my plan."

She looked me in the face, smiling her smile; and the answer was not long in coming.

"I will go in the tlain with you," says she with decisiveness: "but where you leave me, there I will stay, waiting till I die, or till my God convert you, and send you back to me."

"That means that you refuse my plan."

"Yes," said she, bending her head with great dignity.

Then I: "Well, you speak, not like a girl, Leda, but like a woman now. But still, reflect a minute . . . Oh, reflect! If you stayed where I left you, I *should* go back to you, sooner or later: so tell me—reflect, then tell me—do you definitely refuse to part from me?"

Her answer was pretty prompt, cool, and firm: "Yes; I lefuse."

I left her then, walked down the path, came back.

"Then," I now said, "here are two matches between my fingers: be good enough to draw one."

Now she was hit to the heart: I saw her eyes widen to the width of horror—she having read of the drawing of lots in the Bible; knew that this meant death for me, or for her.

But she obeyed without a word after one backward start, and then a hurried hovering indecision of her fingers over the hand I held out. I had decided that if she drew the shorter of the matches, then she should die; if the longer, then I should die.

She drew the shorter . . .

* * *

This was only what I should have expected: for I knew that God loved her, and hated me.

But instantly upon the shock of the enormity that I should be her executioner, I formed my resolve: to drop shot, too, in the moment after she dropped shot, so disposing my body, that it would fall half upon her, and half by her, so that we might be close always: and that would not be so bad, after all.

When, in a sudden passion of action, I snatched the revolver from my pocket, she did not move, except her withered

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lips, which, I think, whispered: *"Not yet . . ."*

And I stood with hanging arm, finger on trigger, looking at her, saw her glance down once at the weapon, then she fixed her eyes upward upon my face: and now that same smile, which had disappeared, was on her lips again, meaning confidence, meaning disdain.

Now I waited for her to move her mouth to say something—to end that smiling—that I might shoot her quick and sudden, and she would not, knowing that I could not kill her smiling: and suddenly my pity and love for her changed into a strange resentment and rage against her, for she was making age-long for me what I was doing for her sake; and the thought came into my mind, "You are nothing to me; if you want to die, you do your own killing; and I will do my own killing": and without uttering anything, I strode away, left her there.

But I think now that this whole drawing of lots was nothing more than a foolery: I think I *never* could have killed her, smiling or no smiling, for to each thing and life is given a particular strength, and a thing cannot be stronger than its strength, strain as it may: it is so strong, and no stronger, and there an end of the matter.

I strode up to the Grand Bailli's *bureau*, a room about twenty feet from the ground, where, though it was now getting dark, I could see, by peering, the face of a grandfather's clock which I had long since set going—half-past six; and in order to fix some definite moment for the effort of the mortal act, I said: "At Seven." I then locked the door which opens upon three steps near the desk, and the stair-door, then paced the chamber. As there was not a breath of air here, and I was hot, seeming to be stifling, I tore open my shirt at the throat and opened a mullion-space of one oriel; then at twenty-five to seven I lighted two candles on the desk, and sat to write to her, the gun at my right hand; but I had hardly begun, when I seemed to hear a sound at the three-step door four feet to my left, a sound like a scrape of her slipper; on which I stole to the door to crouch and listen, but now could hear nothing further: so returned to the desk, and set to writing, giving some final directions for her life, telling why I died, how I loved her, more than my own soul, wooing her to love me while she lived, and to live on to please me; but, if she *would* die, then to die near me, though how she was to come into the locked room to die near me I did not stop to enquire; anyway, tears were pouring down my cheeks, when, chancing to glance round, I saw her standing a ghast posture hardly three feet from my back; and the absolute stealth that had brought and put her there, unknown to me, was like a miracle: for the ladder whose top I saw intruding into the opened oriel I knew well, having frequently seen it in a room below, and, as its length was well over twenty feet, its weight could be no feather's: yet I had been aware of not one hint of its impact upon the window. But there, anyway, she was, wan as a spectre.

In the instant that my consciousness realised her my arm instinctively went out to grasp the weapon; but she, darting upon it, got it before me, flew, and before I had caught up with her, threw it cleanly between two rungs of the ladder out of the window; upon which I dashed to the window to peer down, thought that I saw it down there near a rock, so away to the stair-door I raced, wrung it open, and down the steps, two together, I pelted to get the gun. I remember being touched by some astonishment that she did not follow me, for somehow I forgot all about the ladder standing there for her to go down on . . .

But I was reminded of it the moment I arrived at the bottom, before ever I had gone out of the house: for the report of the gun rang out—that crack, my God!—and crying out, "Well, God, it is done!" I stumbled on, to tumble upon her in her blood.

* * *

That night! of fingers quivering with haste, of harum-scarum quests and ferretings of groans, and appeals to God: for there were no instruments, lint, anaesthetics, nor antiseptics that I knew of in the Château; and though I knew of a house in Montreux where I would find them, the distance was infinite, the time an aeon in which to leave her bleeding to death; and, to my horror, I remembered that there was barely enough petrol in the motor, and the store usually kept in the house used up. However, I did it, leaving her there on her bed: but *how* I did it, and lived sane afterwards, is another matter.

If I had not been a medical man, she must, I think, have died: the bullet had broken the left fifth rib, then had been deflected, for I found it buried in the upper part of the abdominal wall; and for a

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frightfully long time she remained comatose. In which state she still was when I took her to a châlet beyond Villeneuve, three miles away on a mountainside, a homely, but very salubrious place which I knew, imbedded in boscage: for I was desperate at her long collapse, and had hope in that upper air. I did not sleep, only nodded and tottered, and there after two more days she opened her eyes, and smiled with me.

It was then that I said to myself: "This is the noblest, sagest, and also the most lovable, of the beings that God has made: and since she has won my life, I will live . . . But at least, to save myself, I will put the broadest ocean that there is between her and me, for the honour of my race, being the last, and to turn out trumps . . ."

Thus, after only fifty-five days at the châlet, were we forced still Westward.

* * *

I wished her to remain at Chillon, intending, myself, to make for the Americas, whence any impulse to slip back to her could not quickly be fulfilled; but she refused, saying that she would come with me to the coast of France: and I could not say her no.

And at the coast after thirteen days we turned up, three days before the New Year, having traversed France by both steam and petrol traction.

To Havre we came—infirm of purpose that I was: for deep in my heart was the secret, hidden away from my own upper self, that, she being at Havre, and I at Portsmouth, we could still speak with each other.

We came humming into that dark town of Havre in a motor-car about ten in the night of the 29th of December, a bitter bleak night, she, it was clear, poor thing, cramped with cold; and, as I had some recollection of the place, for I had been there, I drove to the quays, near which I stopped at the *Maire's* house, a palatial place overlooking the sea, in which she slept, I occupying another near.

The next day I was early astir, searched in the *mairie* for a map of the town, and could thus locate the Telephone Exchange; then to the *Maire's* house, which I had fixed upon to be her home, where I found the telephone in an alcove adjoining a *salon* Louis Quinze; and, fearing any weakness, I connected with the transmitter-circuit some new cells from the accumulator-room at the Exchange; which done, I went down among the ships by the wharves, fixed upon the first old tub that seemed sea-worthy, broke open a shop, procured some buckets of oil, and by three o'clock had tested and prepared my ship—a day of deathbeds drenched in drizzling, chill. I then returned to the *mairie*, where for the first time that day I met her, and heavy was her soul in her; but when I broke the news that she would be able to talk to me, every day, all day, first she was all surprise and uncertainty, then her eyes turned white to the skies, then she was skipping like a kid; after which we lingered together three hours, going about the town, fetching home stores of whatever she might want, until I saw darkness coming on, and we passed down to the ship.

And when those old screws awoke and moved, bearing me toward the Outer Basin, I marked her standing there darkling on the Quai through heartrending greyness of inclemency, and, ah, God, the gloomy underlook of that gaze, the piteous push of that lip, then the burying of that face! My heart broke, for I had not given her one little kiss of good-bye; and she had been so good, quietly acquiescing, like a good wife, not attempting to force her presence upon me in the ship; and I went and left her there, all widowed, solitary on a continent, blinking after me: and I steered out to the bleak and dreary fields of the sea.

* * *

Arriving at Portsmouth the next morning, I made my residence in the first house in which I found an instrument, a spacious dwelling facing the Harbour Pier, then hurried round to the Exchange, which is on the Hard near the Docks, a red building with facings of Cornish moorstone, a bank on the ground floor, and the Exchange on the first. Here I plugged her number on to mine, ran back, rang—and, to my great thanksgiving, heard her speak. (This instrument, however, did not prove satisfactory even when I had put-in another battery, and at last I put a bed into the middle room at the Exchange, with stores, and here have taken up my residence.)

I believe that she lives and sleeps under the instrument, as I here live and sleep, sleep and live, under it; and my instrument being near one of the beach windows, I, hearing her, can look out toward her over the field of the sea, yet not see her,

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and she, too, looking out over the sea toward me, can hear my speech coming out of the deeps of nowhere, but see me not.

* * *

I this morning early to her. "Good morning! Are you there?"

"Good morning! No: I am there," says she.

"Well, that was what I asked—'are you there?'"

"But I am not here, I am there," says she: "the paladox of the heart!"

"The what?"

"The paladox!"

"But still I do not understand: how can you be both there and not there?"

"If my ear is here, and I elsewhere?"

"An operation?"

"Yes!" says she.

"What doctor?"

"A special one!" says she.

"Ear-specialist?"

"Heart!" says she.

"And you let a heart-specialist operate on your ear? How are you after it?"

"Happy for a sigh. And you?"

"Quite well. Did you sleep well?"

"Except when you lang me up at midnight. Have had such a dleam . . ."

"What?"

"Dleamed that I saw two little boys of the same age—only I could not see their faces—playing in a wood . . ."

"Ah, I hope that one of them was not named Cain, my poor girl."

"No! neither of them! Suppose I tell a stoly and say that one was named Caius and the other Tibelius, or one Charles and the other Herbert?"

"Ah, well . . . So what will you be doing today?"

"It is a lovely day . . . Have you nice weather in England?"

"Very."

"Well, at eleven I will go out and gather Spling-flowers in the park, and cover the *salon;* then I will start upon antimony, for I finished arsenic yesterday . . . Wouldn't you like to be here to do it with me?"

"Not I."

"You would!"

"Why should I? I like England."

"But Flance is nice, too: and Flance wants to be fliends with England, and is waiting, oh, waiting, for England to come over, and be fliends. Couldn't some *lapplochement* be negotiated?"

"Good-bye. This talking spoils my morning smoke . . ."

So we speak together across the sea.

* * *

On the morning of the 8th of April, when I had been separated thirteen weeks from her, I boarded several ships in the Inner Port, a lunacy in my heart: and I selected what looked like a fast boat, one of the smaller Atlantic "steamers," called the *Stettin,* which seemed to need the least toil in oiling, &c., in order to fit her for the sea: for the boat in which I had come to England was a tub, and I pined for the wings of a dove, that I might fly away to her, and be at rest.

With flustered hands I laboured that day, and I should think that I was of the colour of ashes to my lips. By half-past two I was finished; and by three was coasting down Southampton Water by Netley Hospital and the Hamblemouth, having said not one syllable at the telephone about going, nor to my own guilty soul a syllable: but in the depths of my being I felt this fact, that this must be a 35-knot ship, and that, if driven hard, she would go 30 against the drag of the garment of seawood which she trailed; also that, Havre being 120 knots away, at 7 p. m. I should be on its quay.

And when I was away, and out on the bright and breezy sea, I howled to her, crying out *"I am coming!"* and I knew that she could hear, and that her heart leapt to meet me, for mine leapt, too, and felt her answer.

The sun went low; it set. I was tired of the day's labour, of standing in the breeze at the high-set wheel, could not yet see the coast of France, and a thought smote me: and after a quarter of an hour I threw the boat's bows round, my face screwed with pain, God knows, like prisoners whose fingers were ground betwixt screws, and their body drawn out to tenuous length, and their flesh pinched with pincers; and I fell upon the floor of the bridge contorted with anguish: for I could not go to her. But after a time that paroxysm passed; and I rose up sullen and resentful, to resume my place at the wheel, and steer again for England, a fixed resolve now in my breast; and I said "No, no more: if I could bear it, I would . . . but if it is impossible, how can I? Tomorrow night as the sun sets—without fail—so help me, God—I kill myself."

* * *

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So it is finished, my good God.

In the morning of the next day, the 9th, I having come back to Portsmouth about eleven the previous night, when I bid her "Good morning," she said "Good morning," and not another word. I said: "I got my hookah-bowl broken last night, and shall be trying to mend it to-day."

No answer.

"Are you there?" I said.

"Yes," says she.

"Then, why don't you speak?" I said.

"Where were you yesterday?" says she.

"I went for a cruise in the basin," I said.

Silence for three minutes; then she: "What is the matter?"

"Matter?" I said.

"*Tell me!*" she says—with such an intensity and rage as to make me shudder.

"Nothing to tell, Leda!"

"But how can you be so *cruel?*" she cries.

There was anguish in that cry: and the thought took me then, how, on the morrow, she would ring, and have no answer; and she would ring again, and have no answer; and she would ring all day, and ring, and always would ring, with white hair flowing and the eye-balls of frenzy, battering reproaches at the doors of a universe which would howl back everlastingly to her howls only the howl of its soundlessness: and for very pity, my God, I could not help sobbing to myself "May God pity you, woman!"

I do not know if she heard: she must, I think now, have heard; but no reply came; and there I, shivering like the sheeted dead, stood waiting for her next utterance, waiting long, dreading, hoping for, her voice, thinking that, if she sobbed but once, I should drop dead there where I stood, or eat my tongue through, or shriek the laughter of distraction; but when at last, after some forty minutes or more, she spoke, her voice was perfectly firm and calm. She said: "Are you there?"

"Yes," I said, "yes, Leda."

"What was the colour," says she, "of the poison-cloud which destloyed the world? Purple, was it not?"

"Yes, purple, Leda," I said.

"And it had a smell like almonds, did it not?" says she.

"Yes," I said, "yes."

"Then," says she, "there is *another* eluption. Evly now and again I seem to scent whiffs like that . . . and there is a vapour in the East which glows—purple it is . . . see if you can see it . . ."

I flew across the room to an east window, threw up the sash to look; but, the view being barred by the back of a warehouse, I rushed back, gasped to her to wait, rushed down the two stairs, and out on the Hard ran dodging wildly about, seeking a purview to the East; till finally I ran up the dock-yard, behind the storehouses, to the Semaphore, to arrive at the top panting for life; and now I looked abroad, but only to behold all the heavens cloudless, save for a bank of cloud to the north-west, the sun blazing in a space of azure pallor; so back anew I flew, to tell her: "I cannot see it . . .!"

"Then, it has not tlavelled far enough to the northwest yet," she said.

"My wife!" I cried: "you are my wife now!"

"Am I?" says she: "at last? . . . But shall I not die?"

"No! you can escape! My home! My heart! If only for an hour, then death, just think, together—how sweet!"

"Yes! sweet! . . . But how escape?"

"It travelled slowly before . . . Get quick into that boat under the crane—you have seen me turn-on liquid air—that handle under the dial; get oil from that shop next to the clock-tower, and toss it over everything rusted—only spend no time; you can steer by tiller and compass, well, the wheel is the opposite, the course North-East by North—I meet you on the sea—go now—"

* * *

I flew down, all confident, to where the boat lay moored that had borne me the day before, for, as her joint speed with the speed of Leda's boat would be forty knots, in three hours we must meet; nor had I the least fear of her ceasing to live ere our meeting: for, apart from the gradualness of the vapour's progress that first time, I foretasted and trusted my love, that she would surely come, and not fail, as dying saints foretasted and trusted eternal life.

I was no sooner on board the *Stettin* than her engines were straining under what was equivalent to "forced draught"; and, although on the day before it would hardly have surprised me at any moment while I drove her to be carried to the clouds in an explosion from her rusted tanks, this day such an apprehension never crossed my mind, for I knew that I was immortal till I saw her.

The sea was quite placid, as on the previous day, and appeared placider, the skies brighter, and there was a flightiness of

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laughter in the feet of the breezes that frilled the sea in dashing dark patches, like *frissons* of tickling; and I thought that the morning was a genuine marriage-morning, and remembered that it was a Sabbath; and sweet smells our wedding would not lack of almond and peach, though, looking eastward, I could see no blush of any purple cloud, but only whirls of chiffon under the sun; and it would be an eternal wedding, for one day in our sight would be as a thousand years, and our thousand years of delight one day, since in the evening of that eternity death would visit us, sweetly to lay its finger on our sluggard lids. And all manner of dancings and singings—fandango and glee of galliard, corantoes and the solemn gavotte—were rampant in my heart that happy day; and, in running by the chart-house to the bridge, I spied under the table a roll of old flags, and presently they were flying in an arc of gala from the main; and the sea rumpled in a tract of tumbling milk behind me; and I hasted to meet my heart.

* * *

No purple cloud could I observe, as on and on, for two hours, I tore southward; but at hot noon, on the port beam, I spied through the glass across the water something else that moved; and it was you who came to me, O, Leda, my spirit's breath!

When I bore down upon her, waving, soon I saw her stand like the ancient mariner, but in muslins that fluttered, at her wheel on the bridge—one of those little Havre-Antwerp craft, high in the bows—and she waved a little white thing, until I could spy her face, her smile, when I called to her to stop, in a minute stopped myself, and by happy steering came with headway which failed to a slight crash by her side; then ran down the steps to her, led her up; and on the deck, without saying anything, I fell to my knees before her, and I bowed my brow down, down, to the floor, with obeisance, and I adored her.

And we were wedded: for she, too, bowed the knee with me under that jovial sky; and under her eyes were the moist semicircles of fatigue, dreamy, pensive, so dear and wifish; and God was there, and saw her kneel: for He loves the girl.

Then I got the two vessels apart, and there they rested some yards separated through the day. . . .

* * *

I said to her: "We will fly west to one of the Somersetshire coal-mines, or to one of the Cornwall tin-mines, where we will barricade ourselves against the cloud, and provision ourselves for months, for it is quite practicable, we have plenty of time, and no crowds to break down our barricades—and there in the deep we will live sweetly, till the disaster is overpast."

And she smiled, drew her hand across my face, said: "No, no; don't you tiust in my God? do you think He would leally let me die?"

For she has appropriated the Almighty God to herself, naming Him "*my* God," aye, and she generally knows what she is saying, too: and she would not fly the cloud.

And I am now writing three weeks later at a little place called Château-les-Roses, and no poison-cloud, nor any sign of any poison-cloud, has come: and this I do not understand.

It may be that she conjectured that I was on the point of destroying myself . . . she may be capable . . .

But no, I do not understand, and I shall never ask her.

But *this* I understand: that it is the *White* who is Master here; that though He wins but by a hair, yet He wins: and since He wins, dance, dance, my heart.

I look for a race that shall resemble its Mother: nimble-witted, light-minded, pious—like her, all-human, ambidextrous, ambicephalous, two-eyes—like her; and if, like her, they talk the English language with all the *r's* turned into *l's*, that will be nice, too.

They will be fruit-eaters, I suppose, when the meat now about is eaten up; but it is now known that meat is good for men; and, if it is really good, then they will *invent* a meat: for they will be *her* sons, and she, to the furthest circle within which the organ of woman's wit is ordained to orbit, is, I swear, all-wise.

There was a "preaching" man once, who said that the last end of Man shall be well, and very well; and she says the same: and the agreement of these two makes a truth. And to that I now say: Amen, Amen.

For I, Adam Jeffson, parent of a race, hereby lay down, ordain, and decree for all time, perceiving it now: That the one motto and watchword proper to the riot and odyssey of Life in general, and in especial to the race of men, ever was, and remains, even this:

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

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MASTERS OF FANTASY

DUNSANY—A True LORD of Fantasy—Born 1878

Edward John Morton Drax Plunkett (the 18th Baron Dunsany) is the London born Irish story-teller of "the mysterious kingdoms where geography ends and fairyland begins." Among the most famous of his works are "The King of Elfland's Daughter", "Time and the Gods", "The Charwoman's Shadow", the popular Jorkens series, and "The Last Book of Wonder". Mermaids, winged horses, Elder Gods, enchanted gardens, fabulous treasures, and outrageous shaggy dogs, abound in the boundless demesne of Dunsany's imagination. He plucked a quill from a Bird of Paradise and fashioned it into his pen. His prose and poetry is of a gossamer material cut from the gowns of fairies, sparkling with word-jewels from the crowns of ice-queens. With *delicate, dream-like*, diaphanous strokes Dunsany spins his webs of wonder, ensnaring the unwary reader who then becomes an addict to the Dunsanean wine of wizardry. Who drinks from the works of Lord Dunsany courts deliberate intoxication of the senses.

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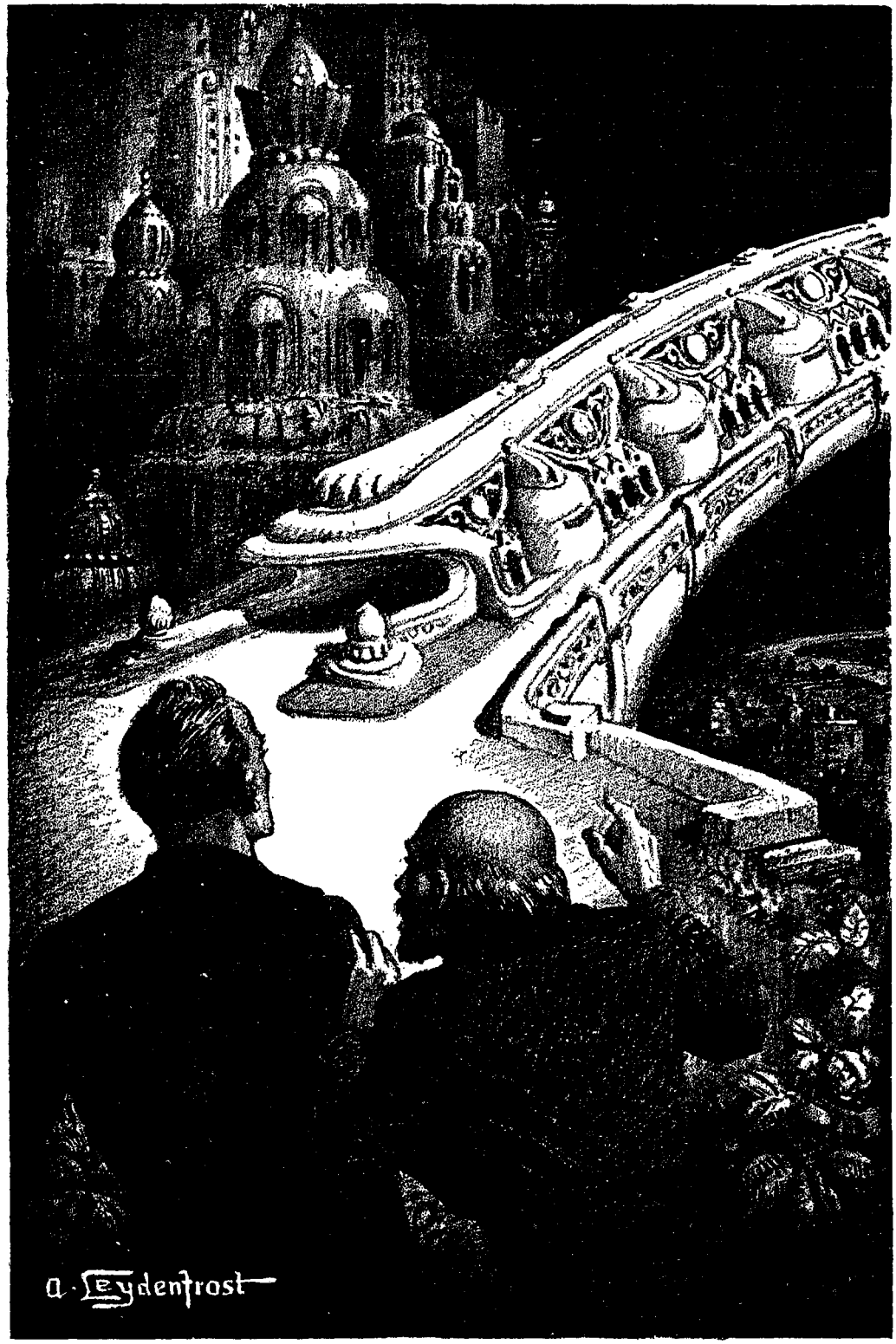

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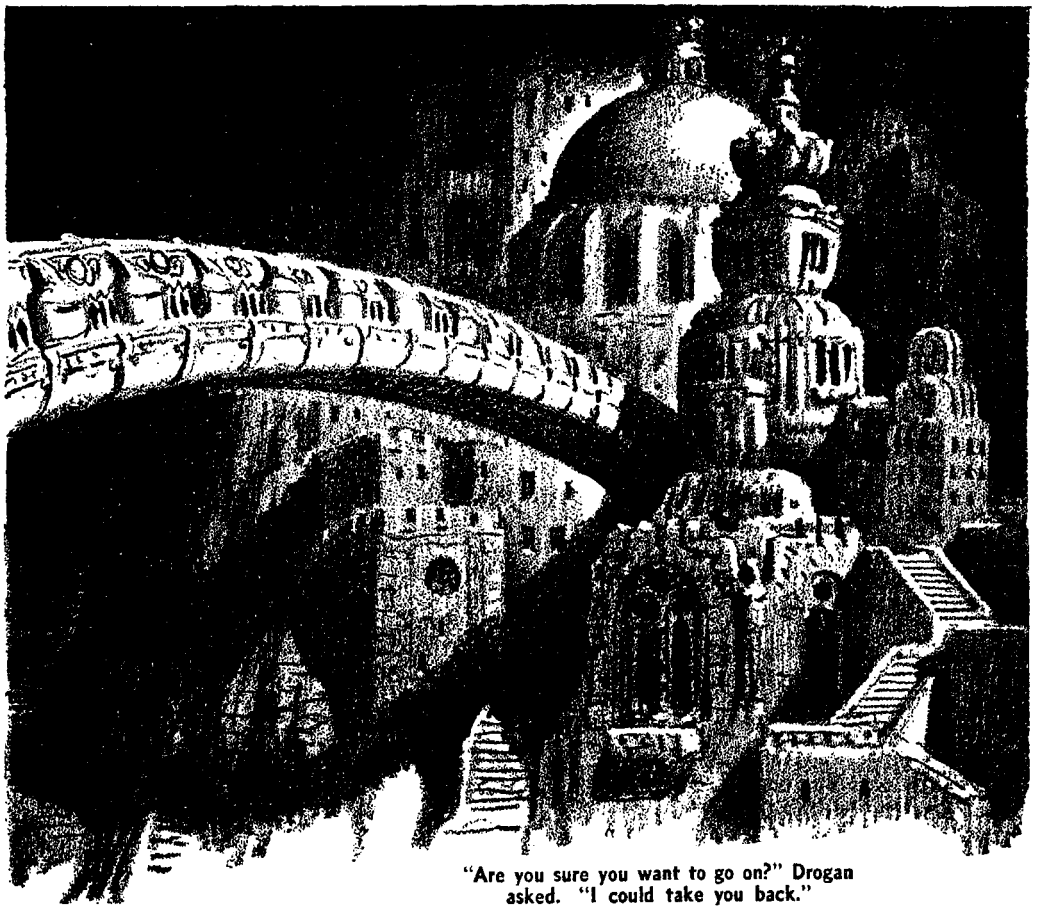

"Are you sure you want to go on?" Drogan asked. "I could take you back."

MIRROR MAZE

By Stanley Mullen

★

He paid his money and took his pick of the glittering paths which seemed to beckon. Only one thing was sure, and that was he must go forward, and never back—into the unknown ending. . . .

★

EVERETT MEANS hated carnivals. They always meant trouble, and trouble always meant a call for him as deputy sheriff. As he cut across the intervening concessions from the parking lot he could sense the curious rustling pressure of a hot and disturbed mob.

Somala's traveling shows was like every other small-time carnival. There was the usual dusty midway, now a glare of lights lined with booths and gaudy banners. Raucous barkers hawked everything in the way of tawdry amusements, the dive-to-death, a line of tired coochie dancers, the usual freaks. If you were not mired in oceans of pink fluff candy, and got past

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the take-a-chance-and-win-a-kewpie concessions, you came to an open area between the monkey house and a racketing motorcycle arena. Here the tinny sound of the merry-go-round was but a muted echo and the ferris wheel a half circle of pinpoint lights above the wax horror tent. Here, also, was a glittering front sewn with myriads of strip-mirrors which proclaimed itself *The Mystery of the Ages—Drogan's Marvelous Mirror Maze.*

Apparently the mystery of the ages had caught up with its creators. A dense crowd milled around the shimmering exterior, from which reflected light exploded in dazzling splinters, and a murmurous drone of angry, excited voices rose in menacing overtone to the shuffle of feet. Carnival employees and special police assigned from town tried vainly to quiet the throngs.

Means sought out Gus Somala, who stood to one side, pale, nervous, sweating according to his bulk. "You the boss of this outfit?"

Somala nodded, his black eyes snapping wildly. "At the moment I'd pay more to get rid of it than to buy it back," he moaned. It was obvious that he was near to hysteria.

"Now what's all this nonsense about people disappearing? Just publicity, isn't it?" Means tried to make his voice sound rough and bullying. His official capacity always made him feel ill at ease, especially being implemented with a holstered .38, which seemed needlessly theatrical and had never been used.

Somala wailed. "I wish it were. But it's not good publicity. Something like this can wreck a carnival. These people are sore. I'm scared, mister. Scared."

Means lit a cigarette. "It's your show. Tell me what's been going on, and I'll see if I can straighten out your mess."

Somala waved a trembling hand at the mirrored set-up. "It's that blanked mirror maze. People go inside and get turned around with a lot of trick mirrors. We have a standing offer of twenty-five bucks for anyone who can find his way through in less than ten minutes. Nobody ever got the dough. I don't pretend to know anything about it. Drogan calls it the mathematics of confusion; it's his attraction, really. Drogan's a stew. He didn't show up this afternoon to set up the place. The boys put it together and it looked okay as it went up. But Drogan has the parts marked in some wacky code of his own. Always puts it up himself. Then we opened tonight and people went in. But they didn't come out. Not all of them. The ones that did were sick. Five are still there."

"If they're still there, get 'em out," Means said roughly.

Somala shook his head. "That's the nastiest part of it. I'm not *sure* they're still there." A pained expression writhed over his plump features. "We tried to find them. People were already getting restless. One guy had been in an hour, another for two hours. People were waiting for them to come out. A guy finally came staggering out. He'd gone nuts, beat on some mirrors and cut himself. It was enough to set the crowd off. They got me out here quick. I—I tried to organize a rescue party. . . ."

"Well?"

Somala shrugged, his eyelids flicked wearily. "We've linked hands and gone through the place. They just . . . weren't there. Then a few minutes ago Pop Drogan showed up, stinking. He sobered quick and blew his top when he found the place set up and operating. His voice was mushy and I couldn't make out exactly what he was yattering about. But he seemed to know. And, mister, he was scared. Warned us not to change the set-up in any detail. Then he ducked inside. Now *he* hasn't come out."

Means ground his cigarette underfoot. "Tear down the place. You'll find 'em all right. They're just wandering around inside, too confused to come out."

Somala's voice was thin with despair. "I wouldn't dare. Not after what Drogan said. We might *never* find them."

Sourly, Means studied the cheap and flimsy structure housing the maze. In its crude way, the place was a work of art; but there was something unreal, unconvincing, about the crystalline drops which reflected all the garish splendors of the midway. It was not the obvious mélange of fun house gadgets with air jets to lift the girls' skirts and tricky floors to keep the customers moving. It was oddly different.

Business was at a standstill. The touch of mystery had put an end to carnival. A hot breath of wind stirred through the fair grounds, whispering in the grove of cottonwoods, raising dust devils among the deserted concessions, rattling signs and flapping canvas along the midway. Chinese windbells of glass tinkled like a squall of crystal raindrops chiming upon the still face of a mirror pool. The tent sides swayed gently, and hundreds of strip mir-

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rors sewn to the drops deluged the huddled people with splinters of exploded light.

"You the sheriff, mister?" Somala asked.

"No, just a deputy. Sheriff Taylor's tied up at the coroner's office." Yes, he thought with bitter cynicism, tied up in a poker game. Irritably, Means wondered what he ought to do. Call the sheriff? Instantly he rejected the possibility. Jeff Taylor was none too keen on him anyhow, and that would do it.

"What are you going to do?" Somala demanded.

Means reached his decision. "I'll have a look inside. Don't worry, I'll find your mad professor for you. And the others. But if I'm not back in twenty minutes, call the sheriff. Then tear the place down."

"Don't go into that place," shrieked Somala. "You'll never come out."

The words beat a hollow refrain inside Means' skull as he strode through the showering glare of the entrance way.

Inside was pale dusk, colored subtly by light flowing from concealed sources. In all directions stretched endless vistas of mirrors, reflecting fragments of him, fragments of other fragments in other mirrors. The multiplicity of images and part-images registered in his brain with a definite shock. It was as unpleasant as an icy shower, but as stimulating. The first blow wore off, fusing into a curious fascination.

He ventured three paces from the door. . . .

OUTSIDE, Somala waited, painfully conscious of the passage of every weighted second.

He knew what the maze was like. Before he had added the maze to his attractions, he had gone through it. With the sure instincts of an old carnival man, he had instantly appraised its cash sucker value. It would draw. Not like the other shows, perhaps, but it had a curious appeal. People would go in—those who liked that sort of thing—with a sheepish grin on their faces, to emerge, eventually, with an expression of thoughtful seriousness in place of the grin. Something about the winding galleries, the numerous blind turnings, the seeming endlessness of the place, combined with the sobering effect of seeing one's self multiplied to infinity upon the walls to end all carnival gaiety for the evening. After it, one went home—which was the reason Somala had placed the maze at the end of the midway. By the time you had reached the place where lights, color, blaring music and the general holiday spirit contrasted harshly with the darkness of night, carnival was through with you anyhow. You were ready to go home.

But the maze itself had been a money-maker. There was a curious fascination that drew repeaters night after night, and best of all, a hushed publicity about the attraction drew more people than the carnival ever had before. A different class of people: tired intellectuals, too blasé for ordinary sawdust splendors; adventure-starved stay-at-homes; even a few long-hairs of a type totally alien to Somala's experience.

There was some sort of legend about Pop Drogan; one heard that he had once been a top-flight mathematician in a big-name university before the liquor got him. There are always such tales about people like Drogan, and Somala was much too realistic to care one way or the other. One sure fact was that Drogan drank too much. Somala heartily cursed Drogan and all his works. This was too much. He promised to fire Drogan the minute he was found. Better, he would personally kick him off the carnival grounds. . . .

* * *

Means made a careful about face, retraced his three paces to the entrance. Relief, of which he was unpleasantly conscious, flooded him as he faced the comforting reality of the outside.

"Get me a rope," he told Somala.

The show owner barked orders. One of the roustabouts appeared from the shadows with a coil of heavy cord.

Means was nervous, irritable. "That will do," he snapped. He tied one end of the cord to the entrance railing and looped the rest over his wrist to feed out easily. "Keep that crowd back," he muttered.

Then he was gone. . . .

* * *

Inside, an impression of isolation built slowly in his mind as he strode purposefully along the corridors of crystalline magic. Partly, it was the diminishing sounds of carnival outside. For a moment, fear gripped him. Then he remembered that under pressure of the maze affair the other concessions had begun to close down. The sound of carousel music grew fainter and died away completely; after that, there were only curiously hushed murmur-

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ings from the crowds outside. Only that, and a suggestive, half-audible mélange of the ordinary night sounds, the wind in the trees, a faint crinkle from the Chinese glass-bells, the monotony of the burbling creek.

Even these half-sounds faded gradually as he penetrated deeper into the mystery. They vanished finally in all-pervading silence, which grew oppressive.

After various false starts into exasperating blind alleys, from which he carefully retraced his steps, Means found a corridor which continued. He followed its windings, paying out the cord as he needed it, recoiling it when he had to backtrack. It seemed he had traveled infinite distances already—too many and too far for the small structure housing the maze. The incredible multiplications exaggerated distance, confused the senses. Small wonder people got turned around and lost themselves. His brain grew tired and numb; turned upon itself to seek refuge in dizziness from the mirrored monotonies.

What a tiresome, miserable end to an unsatisfactory day! Memory skipped backward, rewound and morbidly unreeled its record of a tiring, futile day. He had spent hot, sultry hours on the river road, checking licenses in the vain search for a stolen car. Then, Maxie's *The Cue—Bar and Grill,* where he had stopped by to call in. Step by step, the past few hours repeated their old pattern of meaningless details.

Again, he pushed open the heavy glass and chromium door and entered, noting details in one sweeping glance. Behind the bar Maxie had been a blunt silhouette against rows of polished glasses and the serried ranks of pour-stoppered bottles. Above him, the painted mirror, with its pinkish fawns grazing impossibly green grass. A rank odor of second-hand alcoholic fumes and antiseptic glass-wash mingled unpleasantly with stale tobacco smoke. It was a poor night, for the beer joints, and Maxie was obviously out of sorts. He had waved casually, grunted when Means asked for the phone, fished it from under the bar, and slid it expertly along the polished mahogany.

There was only one customer. An old man, seedy-looking, in a fuzzy brown suit and a hat which did not fit. He sat on one of the upholstered bar stools, staring greedily at an empty double-shot glass. Means got his number after a wait, and the nasal voice of Sheriff Jeff Taylor twanged over the wire. Disgusted, Means hung up. The customer was looking at him, pleadingly. Means wondered if he had seen that face somewhere before, decided he had not.

"Buy me a drink," the old man said. "I've got money. He just won't sell it to me."

Maxie butted in. "No more tonight, Pop. You've had enough. Why don't you go home?"

"I haven't got a home. The voice was thin, querulous, his eyes glassy and slightly bloodshot. Wisps of fine gray hair protruded, strawlike, from beneath the dusty hat which did not quite fit. "Give me just one more, and I'll leave. Just one."

Means hoped Maxie would weaken, but the barkeep was of sterner stuff. He shook his head. Frustrated, the customer transferred his appeal to Means.

"Can he do that, copper? This is a public place and I've the money to pay."

SHRUGGING sympathetically, the deputy pointed above the bar-mirror where a sign read: *We Reserve the Right to Refuse Service to Anyone!* "You can read, Pop. Besides, Maxie's right—"

"Pop" tried vainly to focus on the sign, then leaned confidingly toward the deputy. "I'm not really drunk," came in a thick whisper, "just pretending." His breath was like an old trash can into which not quite empty beer and whiskey bottles had recently been broken.

"You do a good job," Means said, avoiding the blast. "Don't bother me, Pop. I'm busy. Trouble at the carnival. Somebody's got himself lost. . . ."

The customer pointed a trembling finger at a bottle of Seven Crown. An expression of cunning showed fleetingly upon his oddly birdlike face.

Maxie snarled belligerently. "What I said, goes. Not another drop—" He stopped mid-breath, the rest of his thoughts tumbling in sputtering confusion.

A line of blue sparks appeared, ran across the six-foot gap to the line of bottles, and coiled itself about the neck of one. The bottle jerked, tilted, then rose into the air to whiz straight into the little man's hand. In one deft movement, the character had snatched the bottle from the air and poured himself a stiff one. With a solid bump, the bottle set itself on the bar. Maxie's reflexes were good, but while he scooped up the still rocking bottle, the culprit drank.

"That's a good trick, Pop. How'd you do it?"

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Calmly, the old man wrapped his loose coat about his spare chest and revolved himself unsteadily off the stool. He delved into voluminous pockets and came up with a large bill, which he flipped onto the bar with great dignity. Still pale, mopping his sweating face with the bar-rag, Maxie brought change, but the old man airily waved it back. "For your hospitality."

"How'd you do it?" Means persisted, intrigued.

"If you knew that, you'd know as much as I do. Now, sonny, if you're going to the carnival, I'll ride with you."

Means laughed and waved his self-invited passenger toward the door. With ridiculous dignity, the man bowed and preceded him. As he settled himself behind the wheel, Means asked:

"What's an old guy like you want with carnivals?"

A curious cackle came from the figure huddled like a grotesque bird against the corner of the door and the seat-back. "I work there. Just felt like playing hookey tonight. Does there have to be a good reason for everything?"

Means suddenly felt very tired and irritable. "I'm still looking for a good reason for anything."

"You sound like a most unhappy young man," observed the old man; "I'll have to do something about that."

Means snorted. "Don't give me any of that Pollyanna stuff about being a bright young man. I'm not bright or I wouldn't be stuck in this town doing a job I hate. I'm just another squirrel on a treadmill, chasing down nuts, like you. The world isn't my oyster—it's a dried-up old prune. Life, nowadays, is just dull and bleak and dreary. No color, no romance, no adventure; nothing even seems quite real to me. I grew up in a dirty, sticky, stinking coal town; came here because it always looks greener over the hill. It was greener here, and the farms and stuff just give me hay fever, that's all. . . ."

A peculiar gurgle of amusement spilled from the old man's lips. "You think you have trouble," he said. "Look at me. I was a big shot once, had a chair in mathematics at a big university. Now look at me. A stumble-bum, perverting my knowledge to the idle amusement of fools. Sometimes. I think that the powers outside us who design these things have extremely poor aim. Maybe I'm wrong. It could be that what I'm doing is more important, after all. . . ."

The car climbed low hillocks along the river, followed a ridge. Through rifts in the trees showed the scattered lights of town, a glitter of colored pinpoints to one side marking the fair grounds where the carnival was set up. The road divided, and Means took the one leading directly to the carnival.

Means spotted a gap in the lines of parked cars and headed for it. "We'll have to do something about you," the old man mused aloud.

"I'd rather you showed me that bottle-juggling trick," grunted Means, not very amiably.

Again the gurgle of suppressed mirth. "Perhaps I will. It's easy . . . when you know how."

The car jolted to a stop. The character opened the door and slipped out. Shadows enfolded him, and he was gone. Irritably, the deputy went through the motions of maneuvering the car into the hole in the parked ranks. Mechanically, he implemented himself with the .38, feeling oddly embarrassed and theatrical, as he always did. But you never knew what you'd run into. . . .

MEANS snapped out of his reverie with a jolt. Another blind alley. Slowly, winding up the rope as he went, he retraced his steps. The cord, as he reeled it up from the floor, seemed oddly slack. In growing dismay, he followed it. . . .

To the end.

For moments, he stood and stared at catastrophe. Such a thing could not be; it must be tangled somewhere. This might be an odd end, from a splice. Conviction faltered, for he had paid it out carefully and would have noticed any deviations. There had been no splice. It was a new cord.

The end was frayed out, as if it had been cut. The cord had snagged against the razorlike, chipped edge of a mirror and cut itself in two. But he could find no matching end, no end of the section leading outside.

Kid stuff! He swore luridly, lost control of himself, and his emotions took the bit in their teeth and ran wild. Between panic and fury, he whipped out his gun and began smashing mirrors with the butt.

Failing to break his way out, he followed a trail of broken mirrors. But even that grew confusing. As each mirror smashed, its webbed and jagged surface multiplied in thousandfold upon surrounding walls. Right and left, hysterically, Means smashed mirrors, enjoying the jangle of

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shattering glass. But myriad duplications mocked his energy, his every gesture, his very expression.

In desperation, he raised the gun, fired it three times, then sat down to await rescue. Chiming echoes rattled loudly for moments but died away to a sound like faintest laughter. Means got to his feet and went on, followed by the eery suggestion of tinkling laughter. Even it vanished finally. Silence closed in, menacing, oppressive.

Change came gradually. Means was never aware just when it began. But the planes of crystal about him began to open and unfold, shifting, sliding, with a curious kind of movement and fusing about them, as if one held a faceted jewel against a strong light and turned it. Kaleidoscopic colors wove strange living patterns as lights flowed and readjusted. Solids became empty spaces, webbed with glowing color, then as if leaves of some transparently paged book were flipped through rapidly, there was a sensation of swift, incredible substitution. Matter, as such, became unsubstantial, changed, flowed in angular radiations, and suddenly became solid again. But *different*.

It was then that he found the dark, huddled thing, like the body of a crippled bird. It lay in a sort of crypt among the shards of broken glass. A man.

Means knelt and turned over the limp body. The old man, the *same* old man. Means guessed instantly that it must be Pop Drogan, master of the maze. Drogan was not dead. He still breathed, but was overcome with age, alcohol and extreme weariness. His heart fluttered feebly, breath came in weak gasps. His eyes were closed, but he opened them, staring. . . .

A grim smile passed over the bloodless lips. "It would be you," he said in a tight whisper. "Didn't Somala warn you about disturbing the planes of the mirrors?"

"Yes." Means admitted ruefully. "Never mind that. What I'm worried about is getting you out."

Drogan's fingers played idly with the glass fragments, which seemed to be prisms rather than flat sheets. "You can stop your worrying, then. Neither one of us is going to get out. I'm afraid you've played bull in the china shop once too often. Luckily I got the other five out before you started rattling around."

Means flushed uncomfortably. "I thought I could break my way out. I still can, I think. And I can carry you . . . if I have to."

"It's not as simple as that, friend." Drogan's eyes filmed, his mouth twisted in a warped smile. "Glass walls do not a prison make, but the walls of a closed mind are stouter. You can't break through that bullet-proof imagination of yours as easily as you shatter a few mirrors." He sighed heavily.

"You dreamed up this glass rat trap—suppose you show us the way out," Means suggested hopefully.

Drogan laughed quietly, without humor. "You're optimistic. My excitable young friend, I've bad news for you. Where do you think you are? And how long do you think we've been here?"

Means looked at his watch and was shocked to find its face a blank, the hands gone. "Fifteen minutes, maybe," he guessed.

"Guess again," said Drogan bluntly. "I won't bore you with details. You are now just a card file at the Bureau of Missing Persons. Long before you started throwing your weight around, I led out the others, told Somala you'd gone home. The shows have pulled up their stakes and departed elsewhere. The maze was sold as junk and distributed several days after . . . the night you disappeared."

A chill of nasty suspicion went through Means. The old man was crazier than he had thought, a complete nut.

Drogan continued. "I know you suspect my sanity. I'm used to that. Just give me a moment to get my breath, and we'll go . . . wherever you want. Like all great men, I find myself misunderstood by the wise, unappreciated by the mediocre, and applauded, as a means to imbecilic entertainment, by the vulgar multitude. It gave me morbid amusement to pervert my knowledge to the herd amusements, and at the time my folly seemed safe enough. Now, through a fluke, you and I are hoisted by my own petard.

"Don't get impatient. I'll make a long story short. I wrote a paper on my studies, which was unfortunately a bit too advanced for my colleagues. They agreed that my conclusions were nonsense. Perhaps they were; it no longer matters. Each of us has a job to do, somewhere; I had as hard a time finding mine as you've had finding yours. Disappointed, dismissed from the university, disgusted with the futility of life, I turned to drink. And eventually, to this. It was painful to me. In a mood of hurt, bitter anger, a thought came to me. The maze.

"All around us are other dimensions,

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other planes of existence. When scientists speak of the fourth dimension and other-dimensional space, all they actually mean is the possibility of infinite extension *into the unknown*. Our five most obvious senses have no truck with such nonsense, but concealed somewhere among our inner mental workings are other latent senses, dormant, awaiting the necessary stimulus to spur them to action. There is nothing at all supernatural about all this. I just used one of the five normal senses—vision—to stir up these unused ones. They hold the key to the other dimensions By a mass effect of optical planes, so broken and diffused with odd tints, outré combinations of color, by building refraction effects in mathematical progressions, I made it possible for people to see into other dimensions. Brief glimpses, instantly forgotten, but stimulating.

"Admittedly it was dangerous. The sense of vision became so confused that it called upon other, unused senses for help. Once roused, these are not easy to return to the dormant state. And it was necessary to place blocks here and there to turn back the unwary and confused wanderer before his familiar five senses ceased to function and the newcomers transferred him bodily to another plane. The simple workmen who set up the maze, for the last time, were unaware of the necessity for the blocks. They left open a gateway, or gateways, into an infinity of unknowns."

Means had listened in restless silence. "It makes a wacky sort of sense, I suppose. But it doesn't explain how I came to knock about breaking up the scenery instead of flashing off into your imaginary great beyond. How come I didn't react according to schedule?"

"Lack of imagination, I suppose," Drogan replied solemnly. "You in your ignorance, and I in my knowledge, are caught between the dimensions. We could wander here forever, or until we starve. I could open a door, somehow, I'm sure. But there are many doors and some of them lead to peculiar places. . . ."

Means' mind recoiled stubbornly from Drogan's interpretation.

"Wherever we are, we can't stay here," he said.

Drogan shrugged, got to his feet. They moved slowly along a haunted corridor. Arpeggios of prismatic color played ghostlike upon the indistinct walls. Even the floor seemed unsubstantial, as if they trod upon inconceivably dense gas, which squirmed and resisted underfoot. Scarcely audible murmurings rose through a chromatic scale of sound, vanishing at a high pitch beyond hearing.

"This is a world of illusion," commented Drogan. "Auditory hallucination is combining with the visual. I have never been here before. Though I used the optical sense, the same result could be obtained by tampering with and distorting sound. Many times, by accident, a great composer or inspired performer has literally transported his hearers. For one tremendous moment of experience, the gates open; the audience is stimulated partially into the great dimension by exquisite patterns of sound, of light or color. But fortunately for humanity, such occasions are rare. Are brief and transient. A natural block is reached, the audience returns in time, reluctantly, to their normal mediocrity, their normal limited perceptions. . . ."

Now came a storming of gorgeous color and sound. Light in living patterns played tremendous tonal symphonies. Strange, new, undreamed-of sensations joined those of sight and hearing in rioting splendors. Acrid breaths of exotic fragrance caressed their olfactory senses, and minute electrical currents prickled their skins.

Every nerve sprang to life, pulsing with unfamiliar ecstasy.

ABOUT Means and Drogan were suddenly vast gulfs of space, black, empty, then suddenly alive with whirling suns, attended by silvery planets round which spun impossibly quaint moons. Flaring novae expanded in gouts of dazzling light. The universe moved, rushing past at ever increasing speed. It fled into darkness and for a chilling eternity the cold was unbearable.

Galaxies were pale smears of radiance against the vaults of velvet blackness. One expanded rapidly, became a cloud of pinpoints, faint with suggestion of color. Patterns of stars formed, grew larger, brighter. One brave, unwinking pinpoint became a disk, rushed up at them. Darkness lessened as they drew near the sun. Motelike planets flecked the jet immensity. One in particular, a roistering young giant, brave in green lands and the splendor of shining oceans, stood out from the others. Five moons hung in eccentric orbits round it, like silvered globes set in its crown. Seas of hazy atmosphere whirled up, the planet became a bright disk, flattened. Vapor enveloped the men, and tumbled masses of cloud drenched them in the crimson glow of sunset.

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Then whirling darkness, nausea. . . .

Means drew a deep breath of air which tingled in his lungs. He felt the thrust of new, rich blood through his veins, and new vigor, excitement, joy of life, pulsed in his whole being. With one companion, vaguely familiar, he trod an aisle between forests of glittering, opalescent crystal shafts. Overhead ranged a sky of chrysoprase, flaring with jeweled points of light. Three moons, one immense and seeming so close as to be almost within reach of his fingertips, had risen, drenching the opalescent columns with shadowy, sifting light.

The forests of crystal thinned out, were replaced by trees which marched away to right and left as far as eye could see. The ground fell away before Means. He stood on the rim of a hollow bowl so vast that it seemed the reverse-block from which a mighty moon had been carved and thrown away.

Dwarf's twilight bathed the place in splendor of rose and purple murk, for here the glory of sunset had not entirely passed away. A strangeness of densely tangled vegetation clothed the steep slopes round the rim, but lower down the slopes gentled, tapering to a richly prosperous valley round a lake which gleamed like quicksilver in the sombre dusk. Gemlike cities of pearl and jade and gleaming bronze dotted the lake's further shores, while all about the valley lay a network of roads, watch-towers, terraced fields.

Means stood gazing into the immensity and felt his soul expand. Memory came flooding back upon him, and he knew, suddenly, that all his years he had been trapped in a way of life utterly alien to him, alien to all his wishes, his needs, his abilities. Even while bound to its laws, he had felt alien, resentful, had gone through the necessary motions with grim determination, hating the world and its rules every minute of his existence. This was a new world, a different world with a new set of rules. Instinctively, he knew that it would be more to his taste. It would be difficult, of course, especially at first. But a man could live here.

Close at hand, a small stream gashed its way through the rim, its ravine offering a precarious path of descent. Even as he turned to stride down the ravine, Means caught sight of—Her! In a pool deeply shadowed by overhanging rocks there was a flash of white flesh. Water closed in rippling crystal over the sleek, clean-limbed body as the girl swam to shore. Then she emerged and climbed the bank, dark hair clinging in wet swirls about gleaming shoulders. She turned a laughing face up the ravine, drawing her filmy robes about her. Means had a brief glimpse of that face in the moonlight. It was lovely, small, oval, elfin, completely feminine. Her eyes were shadowy pools of dark magic. Then, without a word, she turned and ran down the rocky path, laughing back over her shoulder.

At the foot of the ravine, where cliffs fell away sheer and the stream plunged over the edge in gauzy film, Means stopped and Drogan caught up with him.

A bridge of white, exquisitely carved ivory-stone curved out like the tusk of a titanic elephant. On the further side of the abyss it clung to the crest of the nearest watch-tower, set upon a craggy spire of rock. Circling the walls of the tower and cut deeply into the naked rock of the spire a stairway descended into dizzying depths. Far below, a polished roadway bisected the savage wilderness.

Means was impatient to be off, but the old man clutched his arm to restrain him. "Are you sure you want to go on?" Drogan asked gently. "I could still take you back. . . ."

Wild protest rose in Means, but he shook his head. "I want to stay. I feel at home here, as I never did . . . back there. Not as if I'd been here before, but as if I belonged. I never want to go back."

"Are you sure the girl has nothing to do with this? She may have . . . other interests."

Means laughed. "I felt like that before I saw her. What is all this? *Who are you?* . . ."

"Does it matter too much? People get lost in time and space, get into the wrong dimensions. We do what we can to reshuffle them, get people where they belong. It's a big job. I'm only one of many. If you're satisfied now, I'll leave you here. But be sure it's what you want. There will be no further choice."

Means stared into the gulf below and a new awareness sang in his heart. "I was misplaced. But this is it. I'm just now finding myself. It's too wonderful to be real."

"It's as real as you or I," the old man told him. "All of reality is illusion. Whatever illusion suits you is the right one. The things you've wanted from life are down there. But you have to earn them. . . ."

There was a tremendous crash of shattered glass. The old man had vanished and Means was alone with his illusion. . . .

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(Continued from page 6)

Fantasy lost a keen enthusiast, with his passing. He was ever eager that things should be done which should widen the general liking of fantasy, and did what he could for the hobby through correspondence, attending fan gatherings near enough to reach, and things of like nature. I feel that had he not had a natural modesty, which prevented him from doing anything which seemed egotistic, his name would be a really prominent one in Fantasy.

I knew that you would be interested to know this news, Miss Gnaedinger, and I know, too, that you will grieve with me at Stephen's death.

My best wishes to you,

THYRIL L. LADD.

33 Cuyler Ave.,
Albany 2, N. Y.

THE TERRIFIC TWINS

I have just finished reading your Feb. issue, and I must say that it was great! It contained two stories which are nothing less than masterpieces. "Angel Island" was as poetic as a Dunsany novel and "The Scarlet Plague" was a thing enchanted!

Lawrence did a nice job on illos. The cover and pic on page 65 were the best. The Leydenfrost heading for "Scarlet Plague" was good too, but the Lawrence stuff was better (personally I like the Lawrence gals better than the Finlay dames but Virgil is still better for effect).

I see that someone in TRV is setting up the old cry for "Frankenstein" and "Dracula"— Oh no!! Not that !!! The Shelley tale is definitely dated (as someone has said before) and the Dracula thriller, although it might be wiped into shape with a bit of cutting here and there, is already widely available in several editions. I say, let's stick to the present policy of using modern fantasy that is either hard to get or totally unobtainable.

Looks like we readers are in for a cave man yarn come next issue. Although I ordinarily detest most stories of this type, I'll remain open-minded until Feb. 18th.

That's all I'll say this time, adored Ed, except to wish good luck to the fen's delight, the terrific twins, F.N. and F.F.M

BILL CALABRESE.

52 Pacific St.,
Stamford, Conn.

WONDERFUL EPIC

I want to congratulate you on reprinting London's wonderful epic, a story that is outstanding among all outstanding "disaster" fiction. If the Plague had been replaced by an atomic bomb, it would have been hard to say that it had not been written by a modern-day author.

Many of your magazines are sold here in Panama City. I'd like to contact some of the other people who buy them. Also, I would like to correspond with anyone who reads science-fiction and lives in or near Florida.

SHELBY VICK.

411 Jenks Ave.,
Panama City., Fla.

WANTS BOK

The cover for the February '49 issue of F.F.M. was magnificent. The colors were strikingly used. But the novel was even more than magnificent. It was—words fail me. "Angel Island" was one of the most beautiful and unusual fantasies you could have picked, and it was perfect for the holiday season, which was when I read it. However, I practically sob when I think of what Finlay could have done with it. The one story you could have used Finlay perfectly on, he was left out. Lawrence did adequately, however. He partly made up for it with his beautiful cover.

Unfortunately "The Scarlet Plague" struck a sour note in the issue. Fairly well written, its lack of originality made it no hit with me.

It would be pleasing to many people to have Bok illustrate for your two mags, I'm sure. He is sorely missed in mag work now.

Since you're starting on light works, instead of end-of-the-world "heavies", etc., how about printing some adventure S-F like Burroughs and Kline?

Stapledon and Taine would also make a nice change.

I am a 14 year old fan, who would very much like young fan correspondents. And if there are any fans in Palm Beach County, I'm in the phone book.

BILL SEARLES.

617 57th St.,
West Palm Beach, Fla.

NEW FAN CLUB

Well, here it is—after months of planning, the newest and best fan club has been formed: "The International Science Fantasy Correspondence Trading Club"! It's free—no entrance fees, no dues! I want *every* reader of F.F.M. in it. If you like correspondence write to me; if you like trading, write to our Trading Manager: Calvin Thomas Beck, 271 Dartmouth St., Boston 16, Mass. We intend to be the largest fan club on Terra, and with *all* the readers' support, we will be. We aim to have the most interesting correspondence, and the fairest trades possible. So if you want to have the most fun in science fantasy, get in on the ISFCTC bandwagon! We'll be looking for you!

Route 1, Box 57,
Cuyahoga Falls, O.

RICHARD ABBOTT,
Corr. Man. ISFCTC.

NO UNHAPPY ENDING!

I have just finished reading Feb. '49 F.F.M.

I liked the story, "The Scarlet Plague" by Jack London, but do wish that there were an end to World-enders and World-savers stories!

I have a loud and emphatic "beef" to make about "Angel Island," by Inez Haynes Gillmore.

The story, throughout, held my interest and rapt attention and then—oh!!—what a slap in the face I got in that last line. ". . . . and then Julia's eyes closed for the last time. . . . "

What a horrible ending for a great story!

With all the grief and sadness in the world, we have to find it in the very medium to

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which we turn—a good many of us—as an escape from the cares of the day!

I felt as though I'd fallen a great distance—sort of let down.

Plizz!!

No more tales with Sad Endings—else you lose a regular customer!

Another such and I'll be a passenger on the next Spacer to Mars!

You have an excellent magazine—that's why I read it.

I'll be looking forward to the next issue.

BOB FARNHAM.

1139 East 44th St.,
Chicago 15, Ill.

ABOUT I. H. GILLMORE'S YARN

This is my first letter to any magazine, as I am a new fan.

My husband introduced me to your magazines and others. I have really enjoyed them, too, but now the time has come for me to say my piece.

I have read "The Lion's Way" and had thought that no other story could surpass it, but that was before your February issue of F.F.M. came out.

Never has a story so beautiful yet so heartless been written as Inez Haynes Gillmore's heart-warming and heart-breaking story "Angel Island."

My heart is in my throat as I ask the question that is on a million lips, is there a sequel?

Another point before I say good-by for this time. Is "The Scarlet Plague" Jack London's best? If so then he is (was) a very dull man.

MRS. E. E. BLEVINS.

1120 18th St.,
Huntington, W. Va.

"SCARLET PLAGUE" EXCELLENT

After reading the Feb. 1949 issue of F.F.M., I find myself very disappointed with your lead novel. "Angel Island" did not to my knowledge, have one redeeming factor. It sounds as though it might have been written by a romantic high-school girl. The style is tedious; the overdone descriptive paragraphs are actually laughable. This story could easily be translated into a mere cheap love-novel if the fact that the girls had wings was not brought out. The superb illustrations were sorrowfully wasted on this story. It "fell flat" with a sickening thud.

This story was in striking contrast to the magnificent classic by Jack London. It was one of the greatest science-fiction stories I have ever read, and it left me with the feeling of being helpless before the powers of nature. This story seemed "back to home" with me because I live in the locale of "The Scarlet Plague", the San Francisco Bay area. This story is a striking example of how the human race could degenerate within a few short years as the result of a catastrophe of that magnitude. This is a story that not many people will readily forget. The illustrations of Leydenfrost aptly conveyed the stark, unexpected horror that the plague brought.

The cover disappointed me greatly. Certain stories should not be introduced with symbolical covers. A more widespread view of the havoc in San Francisco would have been more appropriate.

I was happy to see M. P. Shiel portrayed in your Masters of Fantasy section. Although I do not care for Shiel as much as some, he was a truly great writer and deserved to be immortalized as a master of fantasy.

I notice that Roy Hale mentions, in his letter to the readers' page, that he would like to see "The Dunwich Horror" as a movie. I heartily disagree. If the movie could adequately portray the cosmic, soul-shattering horror of Lovecraft's masterpiece, it would be a memorable film. But Hollywood is Hollywood and the movie's mediocrity would only serve to remind the public that "The Dunwich Horror" was "after all, only a pulp magazine story." To have Lovecraft, the greatest master of the macabre, belittled in such a way would actually sadden me.

I have tried to locate *Super Science* at the newsstands and have failed so I enclose one dollar fifty cents ($1.50) in check, which, I think, is the amount of the subscription. I wish the subscription to begin with the January 1949 issue. Hoping that "Dian of the Lost Land" will in some measure compare with "The Scarlet Plague",

Yours FANtastically,

BENNIE JACOPETTI.

1892 Green St.,
San Francisco, Calif.

TOUGH BUT INTERESTING

About the only things that rescued the current F.F.M. from complete degradation were: my letter and London's Gripping Novel of a World's End, "The Scarlet Plague." Of the former I say no more, being modest. (Did I hear someone cough?) Of the latter:

It was a rotten plot, but was saved and brought out by masterful writing. I read a biography of London recently, and he was supposed to have strung papers with new words on them all around his bedroom, so that when he awoke he would forever be seeing those words before him, thus making them a part of his increasing vocabulary. He also would copy the great works of other famous authors word-for-word to gain some knowledge of style.

Whatever he did, it certainly worked; for this was much better written than the only other fantasy I have read by him (meaning novels and novelets only) which was "Before Adam." Certainly it towered high over "Angel Island," which stunk, to say the very least. The letter by A. Bertram Chandler was interesting; I'm certainly glad London didn't use the dialects which "George Whitley" seems to like. However, don't give us too much of London—or any other author, for that matter, only use him (or her) about once every six months and give some other writer a chance—not like F.N. is doing in respect to Merritt. One exception: a novel like "The Lion's Way" that has a sequel should be sequelized or whatever you call it.

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THE READERS' VIEWPOINT

Evidently the cover is supposed to symbolize "The Scarlet Plague"—it certainly doesn't symbolize anything else. Nor even that, for that matter. Where is our old death's head and the bony fingers reaching out (imploring the purchaser to buy the mag?) for a spectral body? Where is our awful green and brown and white and black color scheme? I will never complain about that again. So this is your revenge: this horrible red bloody thing. Why couldn't it be a green-and-purple-polka-dot plague? Then you would have had to illustrate "Angel Island" and perhaps would have had a passable cover. Lawrence has done much better, and any other ed. would have had him do a pic for A.I. But no! you've got to be different. You—

But leave us cease this harsh sarcasm.

I'm really very sorry I can't answer everybody who was so nice and flooded me with an avalanche of mail, about Burroughs; it would almost leave me in the poorhouse. So thanks, all; now I know the friendly spirit of fandom.

How come the first batch of letters you printed all loved and lauded "The Lion's Way" while the last ones said it was "pure adventure," a "cheap adventure story," "third rate adventure," and similar phrases? Mix 'em up, Miss G., mix 'em up!

W. PAUL GANLEY.

119 Ward Road,
North Tonawanda, N. Y.

SHIEL INFORMATION

In Re: M. P. Shiel— Some further notes.

After reading some of the letters in your February issue about "The Lion's Way", and noting that you had quoted me as saying that all Shiel titles are sought after by lovers of the fantastic, I believe some elaboration is in order about this particular aspect of Shiel's novels.

There has always been some question in my mind as to what "fantastic" meant, and I do not think anyone has yet made a study of "fantasy" which will permit us to define what is meant by "Fantastic", "Weird", or by "Scientific ("Science") Fiction".

In "The Works of M. P. Shiel" (Fantasy Publishing Company, 8318 Avalon Blvd. Los Angeles 3, Calif.) I have just described the contents of all Shiel's books, but I did not dare characterize which are "fantasy" and which are not. Shiel's *literary* qualities are both weird *and* fantastic, but not all of his books can properly be called "fantasy" or "science fiction" by any means, even though they are all listed in Bleiler's "Checklist of Fantastic Literature" (Shasta, Chicago, 1948).

At present I am editing for eventual publication as a Shiel Omnibus of the Fantastic by The Fantasy Publishing Company, Inc. the following titles which I consider to include *all* of Shiel's Fantastic or Science Fiction:

The Young Men Are Coming! (1937); The Dragon (1913); The Isle of Lies (1909); The Purple Cloud (1901); The Lord of the Sea (1901).

Shall I risk classification of his other works?

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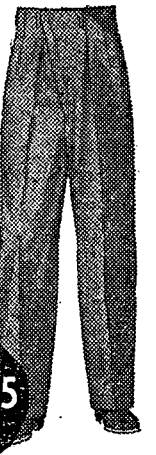

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FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES

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Short Stories (Fantasy, Detective, Adventure)—Shapes in the Fire (1896); The Pale Ape (1911); Here Comes the Lady (1928); The Invisible Voices (1935).

Romances (Fantastic Romances!)—The Rajah's Sapphire (1896); The Yellow Danger (1898); Contraband of War (1899); Cold Steel (1899); The Man-Stealers (1900); Unto the Third Generation (1903); The Evil That Men Do (1904); The Lost Viol (1905); The Yellow Wave (1905); The Last Miracle (1907); The White Wedding (1908); This Knot of Life (1909); Children of the Wind (1923); How the Old Woman Got Home (1927); Dr. Krasinski's Secret (1929); Say au R'voir, But Not Goodbye (1938); This Above All (1933).

Surely we must have some classification in the field of imaginative writing. I hope that the above grouping of Shiel's works will forestall the possible disappointment of some fantasy fans who might not be prepared for a swash-buckling tale like "Cold Steel," or for the reflected crucifixions which make a mockery of the church in "The Last Miracle," or for a tale of mad African adventure and war like "Children of the Wind." Shiel is indeed a master of the fantastic romance, but in a far more literary than popular sense of the word.

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THE READERS' VIEWPOINT

A hint to those who are able to locate any Shiel titles: Do not judge him—or discard him—because of difficulties in reading the first book to hand. Shiel is a long-term project, and *eventually* a rewarding one.

I am always interested in corresponding and trading titles with Shiel collectors.

A. REYNOLDS MORSE.

21709 Kinsman Road,
Cleveland 22, Ohio.

LETTER FROM AN AUTHOR

The February issue of F.F.M. is at hand, and the cover, lurid as always, is well done despite the usual half-clad female on the cover. Believe me, despite my many protests about F.F.M. covers, I do enjoy fantasy illustrations—but darned if many you use are fantastic. The current one takes the sour pickle of 1948! It looks like a Sherwin Williams Paint Co. advertisement, suitably adorned by a lush gal, and lacking only the company slogan.

Inside—well, London is too well known to comment. For those who have never read it, "Scarlet Plague" should be well received. "Angel Island" is quite good, and illustrates the value of F.F.M. Despite the hundreds of fantasy books on my shelves, the thousands more I've read—I had never seen "Angel Island" before. While not every novel is good reading (as far as I am concerned, at least), still I look forward to every issue.

But I'd like to make a point in this connection. With *Fantastic Novels* using the old Munsey magazines, (although seemingly determined on re-re-re-reprinting the Merritt tales) and F.F.M. digging out the old books, you have the field well covered. As far as Science Fiction is concerned, *Super Science* will undoubtedly do a good job. But—*what about new fantasy?* Isn't it time, as you have taken the lead in most other fantasy fields, to start a magazine devoted entirely to *new* material?

Being a writer myself (my first novel, "Blood and Gold" will be published by Harper and Bros. next year), I know the limitations of the fantasy field. Where is the proving ground of the coming greats? *Argosy*, as a slick magazine, no longer covers the fields it created in the long ago. There isn't a major adventure magazine in the business today that will publish fantasy novels. A few shorts, by dint of being just too darned good to refuse, make the grade. But where are the yarns like "The Moon Pool," "The Girl in the Golden Atom," the "Tarzan" of tomorrow going to get their start? The strait-laced "slanting" of most magazines is too well known to go into here. But it's killing off the originality that developed authors like Merritt, Kline, Cummings, Burroughs—yes, and non-fantasy authors like Max Brand, Zane Grey, etc. All of whom owed a great debt to the editorial courage of the late Robert H. Davis. Science fiction is taking hold, and several magazines are trying to lift the stylized barriers, one of which (I hope!) will be SSS. But for the fantasy novel that fits into no category—"The Ship of Ishtar," the "Pel-

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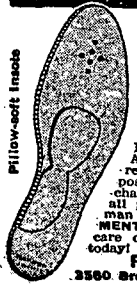

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lucidar" novels' equivalents now being planned —what of them?

I say there should be a fourth Popular Publications fantasy magazine. A fantasy magazine without taboos, without slants. A magazine to bring forth the George Allan Englands, the Burroughses, the Merritts of tomorrow! How about it?

SAMUEL A. PEEPLES.
P. O. Box 4223,
San Francisco, Calif.

TOO MUCH LOVE

From what love magazine did you borrow "Angel Island"? It was a good enough story, but when I spent my hard earned quarter I expected to get a famous and fantastic and mysterious story, not a mushy love novel.

The famous Jack London novelette was good but far-fetched and too long for what it had to say.

I was very disappointed with this month's issue compared with the very wonderful Merritale, "Seven Footprints to Satan," which appeared in your companion mag.

DAN COHEN.
3028 So. James Ave.,
Minneapolis, Minn.

RARE BOOKS OFFERED

I thoroughly enjoyed "Nordenholt's Million." Am glad to see that the long-awaited "Golden Blight" is finally to be published.

I have 56 issues of *Astounding Stories* dating from 1930 to 1935, all in exceptionally good condition, mostly with covers, for sale. Also about a dozen books by Rider Haggard, and other books. Also the best cash offer received takes my mint copies of Lovecraft's "The Outsider" and "Beyond the Wall of Sleep." I am concentrating on collecting first English or American editions of Haggard, in excellent condition. Would like to see published Francis H. Sibson's "The Stolen Continent" and "The Survivors." I finally succeeded in procuring a copy of that rare book from an English source, "A Bibliography of the Works of Sir. Henry Rider Haggard" by J. E. Scott. (500 copies). It is just what is needed in acquiring a collection of first editions. I am now looking for George L. McKay's, "Bibliography of the Writings of Sir. Rider Haggard" published in 1930. Can any reader help me out?

HAROLD F. KEATING.
7 Arnold St.,
Quincy 69, Mass.

WANT BACK ISSUES?

Would you please print the following in your Reader's Column? I have for sale a large selection of back-dated magazines. Titles include *Weird Tales;* F.F.M.; *Startling; Thrilling Wonder; Amazing; Fantastic Adventures* and a scattered couple of *Astoundings.* The majority of these mags are dated '46, '47, and '48, but I

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have a few, mostly *Weird Tales*, dating back as far as 1940.

My price for all these, except the very old ones, is a quarter, which is much below the price asked by the dealers in old mags. In my attempt to complete my own collection I am being soaked right and left by these ghouls, so I can sympathize with my fellow buyers.

I also have, in mint condition and dust wrapper, copies of Lovecraft's "Lurker at the Threshold", and Quinn's "Roads", which I will trade for a copy of "Strange Ports of Call", by Derleth.

JAMES D. SUTHERLAND.
University of Richmond,
Virginia.

LIKED "ANGEL ISLAND"

Enclosed find $1.50 for another subscription to F.F.M. A good thing my old one didn't run out in 1946, during that epidemic of horrible-looking covers, or I doubt if I'd ever got up enough courage to renew! There are about four or five copies of that date that I've never read yet; the covers are so horrible looking that I didn't even want to look at the stories they illustrated. But your artists seem to have finally realized that there was something that could be used for covers besides green skulls and other nauseating things of that sort, and I've been reading what was inside, and glad to do it.

Some of them the past few numbers have been very good, and I've liked most of them except "Scarlet Plague" in this last one. Some of them more than others, of course; "Devil's Spoon" was certainly different and sort of dryly humorous, with poor old Haroot's difficulties and problems. "Purple Sapphire" was a dandy, and I like " Nordenholt's Million" very well too, and "Lion's Way", tho it was hardly a fantastic. Still, it *was* a fantastic adventure, so that's OK by me—that's the kind I like!

Far be it from me to criticize a master like Jack London, but I sort of sympathize with Hare-lip—"the old geezer" *is* too long-winded, and gets tiresome to "listen to" before he reaches the end of his story, in "The Scarlet Plague."

Please keep up with your fantastic adventure type of stories. Weirds and horror stories are not properly fantasy, and neither is science fiction. A little of them to add spice to the pure fantasy is all right, maybe, but there are regular magazines for that type of story, and the fans who like that kind best can buy the magazines they already come in. *Please*, don't start in with things like "Dracula" or "Frankenstein", as some readers have asked for. And please don't start in with werewolves, vampires, black magic, demons, and all that kind of tripe, such as most of the stories in the old *Weird* magazine finally developed into. They may be OK for weirds and horror stories, but they're *not* fantasy. There are too many good fantasy yarns left to print to waste space on such.

Best wishes from a Charter reader (since I

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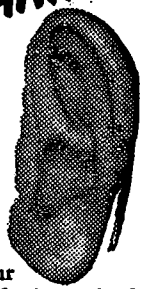

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PS: "Angel Island" more than made up for any tediousness in the second novel; it was positively *beautiful*. Not much excitement, but certainly fantastic, and different from anything you've ever had before.

"ANGEL ISLAND" A HIT

This is still another request for stories by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Having most of the issues of F.F.M. and F.N. (all but five of F.F.M. and three of F.N.) I have tabulated the requests and objections regarding his stories. You soon will have published 60 issues of F.F.M. and in only 14 of them do I find no requests or objection. Lacking the first three issues of F.N. and five of F.F.M. (1939-40) have not included them in my tabulation:

	for Burroughs	against
F.F.M.	69	8
F.N.	14	1
Total	83	9

I thought of listing the names of the people when I reached the year 1946, but then it was too late. Merely to present the above figures required a couple evenings in order to read all those letters. Hope you will print this letter and consider this evidence. "Beyond Thirty," "The Scientists' Revolt," and "Beyond the Farthest Star" would be appropriate, especially "Beyond Thirty," since it deals with England in the 22nd century.

Should like to obtain the issues of F.F.M. and F.N. which I lack: F.F.M., Nov., Dec., 1939, May-June, and Aug., 1940, and Feb., 1942. Also Vol. 1, Nos. 1, 2, 3 of F.N. I still have quite a few extra issues of each month of F.F.M. and F.N. as far back as 1945 to offer for trade.

Both "The Scarlet Plague" and "Angel Island" are good stories. Let's have more by Miss Gillmore.

GORDAN STOECKLER.

3420 23d SE,
Washington, D. C.

SUGGESTIONS

Here's two votes (my father and I) for publishing of the following—*if possible:*

Lovecraft, H. P.—"The Horror At Red Hook."

Train, Arthur—"The Man Who Rocked The Earth (Satevepost, circa 1914.)

WILLIAM N. AUSTIN.

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* * *

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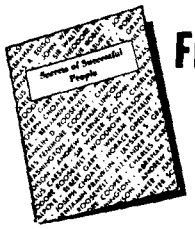

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